WONTUS

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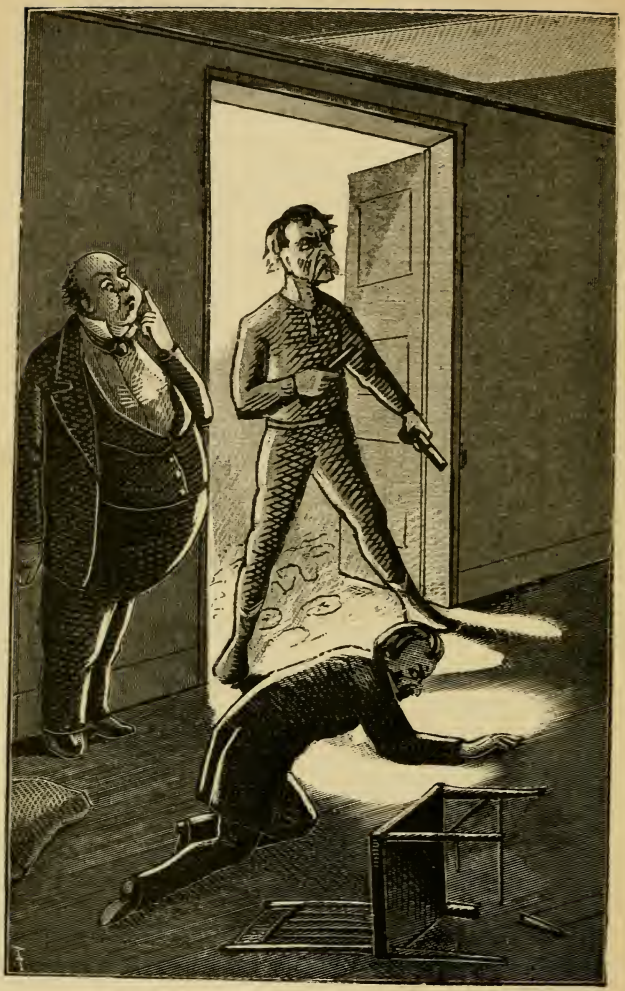

"IN SHIRT AND DRAWERS, WITH HIS PISTOLS IN HAND."

[*Frontispiece.*]

Page 233.

WONTUS

OR

THE CORPS OF OBSERVATION.

BY

COL. WILLIAM M. RUNKEL.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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TO

CHARLES E. WARBURTON, Esq.,

PHILADELPHIA.

My dear Sir:—A desire to testify my appreciation of your friendship impels me to dedicate this work to you.

I might have requested your permission thus to intrude upon you, but I fear that if I had, your name would never have appeared on this page.

Please accept this slight testimonial of my regard, and do me the favor to remember always that I am

Yours very truly,
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

When I wrote these pages I had no other object in view than to endeavor to please the people I was writing for. Curious people, however, demand that I shall say more than this, hence I indulge in these prefatory remarks.

The question has been asked, Where and how did I come into the possession of the information which I now present to the world? This question I would like to answer, but necessity compels me to waive it. By this I do not mean to imply, or even insinuate in the remotest sense, that it is none of the reader's business, but simply to dispose of a most perplexing question in the briefest possible manner. I might enter into a lengthy argument to prove the absolute truth of all I have written, but I have tried to say all I can say *of* my work, *in* it, believing that not even the slightest semblance of a doubt will ever linger in the mind of my readers concerning its authenticity.

With the people most interested—I mean the

characters themselves—I can only say that, although they may resemble the people we meet in every-day life in some degree, yet they are all creatures of the imagination. Sufficient of the characteristics, aims, and actions of each one is set forth in the pages which follow, and in due time will come under the notice of the attentive reader.

With this brief introduction I have the pleasure to present the book itself.

NOVEMBER, 1873.

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WONTUS,

OR

THE CORPS OF OBSERVATION.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE CHARACTERS ARE INTRODUCED, AND THE CORPS OF OBSERVATION BECOMES A THING OF LIFE.

"Tommy," said Mr Olympus Wontus to his man-servant, "it's awful!"

"Yes, sir," answered Tommy, and silence reigned.

"Yes, yes, it's awful!" repeated Mr. Wontus, as though speaking to himself, rising from his chair and gazing abstractedly out of the window. "The thunder-bolts of Jove and the dogs of war have been let loose on our beautiful land, and what it has taken years to build up will be torn down in a day." And Mr. Wontus continued to gaze out of the window.

"Can you see 'em, sir?" asked the man who had been addressed as Tommy, and who now looked up from his work of scouring the andirons.

"See who?" asked Mr. Wontus, fixing his glance on the questioner's face. "See who?" he repeated, sharply.

"The thunder-bugs of Jove and the dogs."

Mr. Wontus's face lost its vacant expression; he thrust his hands into his pantaloons pockets, and for a moment gazed on his servant-man in silence. By-and-by his lips parted, and a shade of sorrow seemed to pass over his face. At length he spoke:

"Tommy, you're a fool!"

"Yes, sir."

"I've told you so a thousand times before, but there seems to be no improvement in you."

"Yes, sir."

"Your associations must be bad."

"They must, sir."

There was silence for a few moments, during which Mr. Wontus gazed fixedly on Tommy, and Tommy worked with renewed vigor on the andirons.

"Tommy," said Mr. Wontus, mildly, "with whom do you associate mostly?"

"With you, sir." And Tommy looked up with innocence beaming in his face; but Mr. Wontus had turned and was looking out of the window. His face was clouded, as much as such a genial, happy face ever could be clouded; but the cloud was soon dispelled, and a look of firm resolution took its place. He walked to the table and took a seat.

"Tommy, come here."

"Yes, sir." And the man arose, and running his grimy fingers through his coarse, unkempt hair, and thus streaking his face with the dirt from his hands until he looked like the colored prints of the aboriginals which we see in the shop-windows, he took his place before his employer.

"You've been a faithful man," said Mr. Wontus, after a pause, "but, Thomas (Mr. Wontus spoke emphatically), you are a very dull one; that is, I think you are sometimes, and then again I think you are not. Now, I did not say anything about the thunder-bugs of Jove: I said thunder-bolts." Mr. Wontus stopped speaking, and looked at his man.

"Yes, sir," said Tommy, humbly.

"Then why didn't you understand me?"

It was evident that scenes of this kind had occurred before, and that Mr. Wontus was now struggling for the mastership. He repeated his question, and the man stood before him scratching his head, as if in doubt. Soon a bright look stole over his face, and with an air as much as to say, "I've hit on the right thing," he answered:

"My association, sir."

"Damn it, sir!" cried Mr. Wontus, with explosive anger; and, jumping up, he flung his hat upon his head, and in a moment had vanished through the door, leaving his man standing in bewildering uncertainty whether to stay or fly. First

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he looked at the chair on which Mr. Wontus had sat, then he looked to the door, and thus in silent contemplation he stood for a long while without moving. He appeared to be busy with his thoughts. In time these found expression in words.

"Thomas Thomson," said he, "you've been to blame in this here thing. Here you've been to work for Mr. Wontus these here ten years,—since you was a boy,—and you ought to know your man. (A pause.) I wonder why he didn't never get married? As rich as cream; but here he's been a livin' all alone in this here tavern for Lord knows how long, and ain't got no wife yet. (Another pause.) Yes, a good man; as good a man as ever lived. Kind-hearted? As kind-hearted as ever a human could be. Lord! why he wouldn't do a mean thing to nothin' or nobody for the world; and putty good lookin', too. Says he was born and raised here; but if he was, where's all his 'lations? (A pause.) Made his own money a boilin' soap, an' ain't got nothin' or nobody to bother him. Why, he's the goodest man I've ever seed in my life. Lord, look as how he treats me! I reckon I've made him mad now, but I don't know; I don't understand how it is that me and him have so many misunderstandin's."

Thomas here fell into a condition of reflection so profound that he did not notice that his master had returned, and was standing inside the door, his face wearing its usual genial and kindly expression.

"Thomas," said he, "I've been thinking." He walked to the window, and gazed abstractedly into the street.

"You have?" said the gentleman addressed, looking up, without manifesting the slightest concern at the change in the manner of his master.

"Thomas," said Mr. Wontus, "I've concluded to go to war."

"To war?" Thomas's mouth opened, and he gazed at his master as though Mr. Wontus had suddenly transformed himself into a cannon, which he expected to explode in a moment.

"Yes, Thomas," said Mr. Wontus, firmly, "I think that's what I'll do."

"You're a jokin'," cried Mr. Thomson. "They wouldn't have you. And s'pose you did go, what would you do? Them 'ar legs couldn't march." And Mr. Thomson cast a glance

over the understandings of his master, which was equivocal, if nothing more.

"Yes, that's what I'll do," cried Mr. Wontus, without heeding the remarks of his servant. "I want something to do, something to engage my attention. Here I sit, day after day, week in and week out, and do—do just nothing. Every man ought to do something always, but more particularly now. I've got money,—yes, more than I want. I've subscribed to all the government loans, and about everything else, but I want to be more active. Why, I can arrange it; and who knows but Olympus Wontus, the retired soap manufacturer, may be of some use in the world after all."

During the delivery of these remarks by the master, as though he were talking to himself, the man's face, which but a moment before was smiling, assumed a grave shape, and at length settled into an expression of terror.

"Lord, Mr. Wontus!" he cried, excitedly, "you won't go to the war, will you? Why, the rebels will cut you into little pieces. You can't run like our fellers did at Bull Run, and, sure as shootin', you'd be took and hung!"

"You don't understand," said Mr. Wontus, kindly, interrupting. "No, you don't understand, Thomas," said he, after a pause, during which he laid his hand on his servant's shoulder.

"Do *you* understand?" cried Mr. Thomson, excitedly,—"do you understand, sir? Was you ever captured and hung? No, of course you wasn't; and do *you* understand? No, of course you don't. Then how am I, a feller what ain't never been out of New York in his life? No, I guess I don't; and 'scuse me, Mr. Wontus, but I don't want to. This here country is good enough for me, and them fellers what want to go can do it; but Mr. Thomas Thomson don't go, nohow!" Having finished his speech, which was delivered with great force and vehemence, Mr. Thomas Thomson stepped back and looked at his master as though his argument was unanswerable.

There was very little of that feeling which commonly exists between a man and his servant, between Mr. Wontus and his servant; in fact, it sometimes looked as though Mr. Wontus was the servant and Mr. Thomson the master. Mr. Wontus had peculiar ideas concerning his fellow-man, and while he drew a strict line in social intercourse with the world, yet he

always felt that every man who was born in the image of his Creator was his equal,—no better, no worse. His servant had been with him for years; he had grown up to manhood in his service, and he had, in his loneliness, come to look upon him more as a companion than as a menial.

"Tommy," said Mr. Wontus, quietly, and with kindness beaming from his large, brown eye, "you don't understand me. Now listen and I'll tell you my plans. I don't intend going into the army as a soldier, but simply as a corps of observation." (It may here be of interest to all concerned to know that Mr. Wontus not unfrequently pronounced his words as he had seen them spelled, and this fact gave rise to an interruption.)

"A corpse!" cried Mr. Thomson, in evident trepidation. "A corpse of observation! Oh, Mr. Wontus! my dear, good, kind friend and pertector, don't be a corpse! Be anything else but a corpse. Corpses ain't healthy no times—never; and observation corpses are as bad as the worstest——"

"Come, come, Tommy," cried Mr. Wontus, interrupting, "as I said before, you do not understand me. Now keep quiet until I explain. A corps ain't a corpse, Tommy; it's another thing. It's a man or two, or more than one man, or a good many, according to the way it's done and the number who want to go; in fact, Tommy, it ain't exactly clear to my mind what a corps is, only that it ain't a corpse after all. General McClellan, the great chief of our army, was a corps once; not a dead corpse, Tommy, but a corps of observation. He was sent to the great siege of Sebastopool to see how things were done there, and that's the reason why he was a corps. You see, Tommy, General McClellan was a corps, and that's the kind of corps I intend to be. I don't intend to fight; I only want to see,—to have something to do,—to help the brave fellows who are standing between us and the enemy who would tear down that flag which we love so much and trample it in the dust; that's all, Tommy,—that's what I want to do."

For a few moments Mr. Thomson stood in an attitude of deep thought. His head was bowed, his eyes were fixed on the floor, and the dexter digit of his left hand lay along his aquiline nose. He speaks:

"A corps of observation ain't a corpse?"

Mr. Wontus nodded.

"A corps ain't a corpse?"

"Not as you understand it," said Mr. Wontus.

"A corps ain't a dead corpse, but a live corps?"

Again Mr. Wontus nodded.

"A corps——" Mr. Thomson stopped suddenly and looked perplexed, and then, as if speaking to himself, he continued: "If a corps is a corpse, then it ain't a corpse; if a corps ain't a corpse, then it is a corps! It's mighty sing'lar. I'm blessed if I see it with these here lamps." And then again he was silent.

"Tommy," said Mr. Wontus, "I shall need a man like you to accompany me; but I'll not press you to go if you don't want to. I don't think there would be any danger."

"General McClellan was a corps, was he?" remarked Mr. Thomson.

"He was."

"He ain't a corpse now?"

"No."

"Could I be like the general?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Wontus.

"Mr. Wontus," said Thomas, looking up, "I've never deserted you, and I never will! I'll go!"

And thus it was settled that Mr. Thomas Thomson, who had stood by his master faithfully in the past, would stand by him faithfully in the future, although there continued a lingering doubt in his mind as to how men could be a corps and yet not be a corpse. It is one of the beautiful idiosyncrasies of our language, and might confound wiser heads.

The matter between master and man having been satisfactorily arranged, Mr. Wontus again turned to the window, and Mr. Thomson to the andirons. The day was bright and beautiful, and the buds of early spring had just commenced to make their appearance on the trees and shrubs in the small yards about him. Mr. Wontus stood gazing out of the window at the flags which floated, "like a rainbow in the skies," from the different flagstaffs of his patriotic neighbors, and was apparently lost in thought.

"Yes, my mind is made up," said he, suddenly, looking round. "Tommy, you know where Mr. Nidd's rooms are?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you go round to Nidd and ask him if he will not

be kind enough to slip around here, on his way down-town this afternoon. Tell him I have business of importance. Yes," he continued, after a pause, "Nidd is the very man: cool, sharp, and brave. He shall be one of the party. (Reflecting.) His meanness may prevent him. (A pause.) I'll offer to bear half of his expenses myself. He'll go; I'm sure he will. Yes, yes, Tommy, run round and tell Nidd that I want to see him to-day—this afternoon—as soon as possible."

In a brief time Tommy made his exit, and Mr. Wontus was left to himself.

"Nidd's the man!" cried he, clapping his fat hands together and rubbing them till they were red. "Yes, Nidd's the *very* man. Let me see: we've been acquainted for ten—yes, over ten years now,—and I guess Nidd's pretty well off. He's a little singular, and will quarrel over his rubber; but he's the very man, for all that. Let me see: I'll write to my friend Moxley, and procure the necessary information and papers from the departments at Washington." And Mr. Wontus accordingly sat down and wrote the letters, giving full particulars about how he wished to go about among the soldiers, at his own expense, and lend them a helping hand wherever he was able. He had no fears but that his application would meet with success, for his friend Moxley was a clerk in one of the departments, and he felt that Mr. Lincoln, who had never been known to refuse a kindness when it was in his power to grant it, more particularly when it was intended for the good of his brave soldiers, would grant his request. But as yet Mr. Wontus did not know how many his party would number, so, leaving a blank space, he patiently awaited the appearance of his friend, Mr. Nidd.

"He's comin'!" shouted Thomas, rushing into the room. And in truth he was, for the words had scarce died on the servant's lips than a tall, red-faced, gaunt-looking, middle-aged gentleman presented himself at the door, and, without further ceremony, walked into the room. His hair was of a brownish hue, and was clipped close to his head. A pair of small, deep-set blue eyes looked out from beneath a pair of shaggy eyebrows; and a stiff, reddish beard, trimmed close, surrounded his face and mouth. His legs and arms were long, but not disproportionate to his body, and his clothes were of the shabby-genteel order, much the worse for wear.

"Wontus," said he, in a sharp, brusque manner, "what do you want?"

"My dear Nidd!" cried Mr. Wontus, jumping up and grasping his friend by the hand, "I want to give you a little recreation: I want you to accompany me, to leave business to the dogs for awhile, and enjoy a little of life while there is yet time."

"Uh!" ejaculated Mr. Nidd.

"Why, it will be grand; so new, so novel, and decidedly original. Why, we'll be the wonder and admiration of the world," continued Wontus, without heeding the skeptical glances which his friend bestowed upon him. "Why, I can see us now, as we journey along and view—always from a safe place, Nidd, always from a safe place—the shock of battle, and——"

"Stop!" cried Mr. Nidd, commandingly. "What in the devil are you talking about?"

"Yes, yes," said Wontus, "I had forgotten. Come, be seated, my dear Nidd. Tommy, give us two glasses and that bottle on the top shelf. Come, sit down, Nidd, and I'll relate to you my plans."

Both gentlemen were seated, and, after having refreshed themselves, Mr. Wontus entered into a full and complete explanation of his plans. At first Mr. Nidd laughed, and pooh-poohed the whole affair as visionary and impracticable; but Mr. Wontus knew better, and then the gentlemen again refreshed themselves from the bottle, which stood between them on the table.

"My business," said Mr. Nidd, after a time, "would suffer by my absence; in truth, to be candid, Wontus, I'm too poor."

"Poor?" echoed Mr. Wontus. "Why, Nidd, you haven't spent an unnecessary cent since your good wife died; let me see, that's five years ago, and your conveyancing business has been large,—I know it has. You ought to be a very rich man. I'm afraid——"

Mr. Wontus was interrupted by his friend jumping up and declaring that the whole affair was impossible; and then he showered such a multitude of objections and obstacles on Mr. Wontus that, had that gentleman not been thoroughly imbued with the idea, he would probably have given it up.

"Come, come, Nidd!" cried Wontus, rising, forcing his friend into a chair, "I need your services in this matter, and I am willing to pay for them. (Nidd's eyes brightened.) Yes, you will receive enough from me to bear your expenses, and I insist that you shall take a holiday,—your health and spirits need it." And then Mr. Wontus grew eloquent over the originality and beauty of his plans, and argued so conclusively that at length Mr. Nidd was able to see some merit in it, and remarked that he did need a little recreation, and finally, with the influence of the friendly bottle, consented to at once close up his office, and assist in making the necessary arrangements.

"Thomas will accompany us," said Mr. Wontus, after it had been settled that Mr. Nidd would immediately render his assistance in making the preparations; "but I've been thinking," he continued, after a pause, "that it wouldn't be a bad idea for us to have with us a younger and more experienced man than you or I, Nidd,—a man who has seen the world, and who is familiar with men and things. Such a man could probably be procured, and, I have no doubt, would be a great saving as well as service to us. I've thought for a long time of placing a man in the Army as a substitute for myself. I might get such a man to accompany us, and when the Government needed his services, why, we could just put him into the ranks. What do you think of that, old fellow?" almost shouted Mr. Wontus; "a grand idea, eh?"

"Well," replied Mr. Nidd, sipping his liquor, and gazing out of the window, "the idea is good; but I am afraid——"

"What are you afraid of?" queried Mr. Wontus, firing up.

"The expense would be——"

"Expense be dod-rotted!" shouted Mr. Wontus. "Nidd, I'm a rich man, and this war is making me richer; my property is worth nearly double what it was a year ago, and I've got more money than I really have any use for. To be sure, I've contributed pretty well to the different funds for the help of the government and the soldiers, but I've got money to spare. I've never spent anything for pleasure; I've lived like a miser all my life, and I'm resolved to make a change. (A pause.) Another thing, Nidd: we'll die some of these days, and we can't take our money with us, you know."

"But we can benefit our families," suggested Mr. Nidd.

"*Our* families? What family have you or I got? Nobody.

I've got relations, but what do I know about them, or they about me?" Mr. Wontus ceased speaking for a moment and gazed abstractedly at the table. "Well, no matter," he continued, as though following out a line of thought, "I'm resolved."

And after a little more talk it was settled that Mr. Wontus, Mr. Nidd, and Mr. Thomas Thomson should immediately settle their affairs and be ready to leave for the war without delay.

"Nidd," said Mr. Wontus, as that gentleman was about to leave, "see if you can't get such a man as we want. See some of your friends, and get a man if possible; for such a man—a smart, active fellow—will be of great service to us; don't you see?"

Mr. Wontus would probably have gone on expatiating on the necessary qualities for such a man to be possessed of for an indefinite time, but Mr. Nidd suddenly signified that he *did* see! and left the room, promising to call again in the evening.

All was bustle and excitement in Mr. Wontus's room during the rest of the day. Thomas Thomson was dodging here and there; one moment doing a chore here and the next moment undoing what he had just completed. The closets and trunks and boxes were raked out, and their contents piled in heaps on the floor, only to be thrown back again in worse confusion than they were before; chaos existed in every direction, and Mr. Thomson appeared to have suddenly been transferred to realms of perfect bliss. He chuckled with inward delight; the longings of his heart were at last to be gratified,—he was to see the world, and in a sphere which, he fondly hoped, would pass his name into history. (Be it known that Thomas Thomson, although a man filling an humble station in life, had aspirations like other men, and, without knowing exactly how or why, he hoped to gratify them.) As for Mr. Wontus, he was the embodiment of pleasurable excitement. His room was too small to contain him, and, leaving Tommy to make whatever arrangements he chose, he rushed down-stairs to acquaint his landlord with his determination. This he did in a flighty, almost incoherent, way, much to that gentleman's consternation and sorrow, for Mr. Wontus was not only one of his most respectable boarders, but one of the most profitable, and he was sorry

to have him leave; but Mr. Wontus was determined, and the landlord's best efforts toward persuading him to relinquish his project were lost. Mr. Wontus would listen to nothing, and in high glee he rushed into the street, buttonholing his acquaintances, and bestowing alms on all who asked. He was at peace with himself and all mankind, and he looked upon every soldier he met as his friend and companion. He was not what is generally termed a "drinking man," although he would occasionally imbibe with a friend, but on this occasion he came near forgetting that he was the retired merchant, and evening found the jolly Mr. Wontus jollier than ever.

On returning to his quarters, he found them occupied by his friend, Mr. Gascon Nidd, and a stranger. The new-comer appeared to be perfectly at his ease, and, with one leg thrown over the arm of his chair, he sat reading one of the papers which Mr. Thomson had raked from the closet and left lying on the floor.

Throwing his hat upon the table, and running his fingers through his hair, he hailed the gentlemen in a gleeful way, and offered a hand to each. Mr. Nidd merely nodded his head, but the strange gentleman was on his feet in a flash, and, grasping Mr. Wontus's extended hand in both of his, immediately poured forth such a volume of language that, for the moment, Mr. Wontus was taken quite aback.

"I'm delighted to see and know you, sir," cried the stranger. "I hope you enjoy good health, and will continue to do so forever."

"Mr. Wilkins,—Mr. Benjamin Wilkins, Mr. Wontus," said Nidd, introducing the gentleman.

"Glad to see you, sir; very glad to see you, sir. Sorry I can't offer you more hospitable quarters; but, you see, I'm about to go to war, and—— Tommy! Tommy!" shouted Mr. Wontus; but Tommy was not to be found. Like his master, he had found it impossible to restrain his joy, and he had gone out, where there was room to vent it.

"War, Mr. Wontus, war?" remarked the new acquaintance, with considerable gusto, as Mr. Wontus sank into a chair. "Ah, sir, I have seen it in all its beauties, terrors, and vicissitudes. The treacherous sands of Mexico have blistered my feet, and I've slept among the magnolias and cactuses; the burning suns of India have blinded me,—I was one of the de-

voted garrison of Lucknow,—and my eyes beheld the snows and sufferin's of the Crimea. I have seen it all as a soldier of fortune, and I love the life with all its dangers; bravery conquers all difficulties."

"You've seen it all!" gasped Mr. Wontus.

"*All!* Yes, and more——"

It is impossible to say how much further Mr. Wilkins would have gone had it not been that Mr. Nidd interrupted him with the statement that Benjamin Wilkins was the man who had been recommended to him as the sort of person Mr. Wontus wished to secure.

"Ah, yes,—yes, I remember; a capital man, Mr. Nidd,—a capital man. Mr. Wilkins, I am glad to see you,—to know you, sir. You have heard what we propose to do?" And Mr. Wontus again grasped the new-comer's hand and shook it warmly.

At last it was all arranged that Mr. Wilkins should go with the party as a substitute and general managing man. He was to receive thirteen dollars a month during the time that he was with Mr. Wontus, and when that gentleman desired him to enter the service of his country as his representative, he was to receive a present of five hundred dollars in cash.

A day passed. During the time that the baggage was being packed and the effects of the different gentlemen were being disposed of, Mr. Wilkins's services were of great value. He understood everything, and appeared to have an instinctive knowledge as to where everything was to be had at the shortest notice. Had it not been for his expensive habits Mr. Wontus would have thought—he was very near to it already—that his services were absolutely indispensable.

At length everything was arranged. By the advice of Mr. Wilkins, each one of the party was provided with an outfit of woolen clothing; and an extensive assortment of bottles, etc., were put in the charge of Mr. Thomas Thomson. At last all was in readiness, and the party—Mr. Wontus, Mr. Nidd, Mr. Wilkins, and Mr. Thomson—were assembled in the first-named gentleman's room for the last time.

"I feel a little sad, for all," said Mr. Wontus, looking about the familiar walls of his room.

"Bad time!" snapped Mr. Nidd.

"There is a feelin' of tenderness for that which we have lived among," said Mr. Wilkins, sympathetically,—"a sort of indescribable feelin'; I don't wonder at your havin' sad feelin's, Mr. Wontus. For myself, I am a man of the world, and all places are home to me."

"Wilkins," said Mr. Wontus, touched with the remarks of his companion, "I have to look at you, sometimes; you are evidently a man of varied attainments and ability. Some day you must tell us the story of your life,—why not to-night?"

"I would be delighted to do so; but first I have a proposition to make which I hope will meet with your approval. It is this: That inasmuch as we shall be all together, and travelin', as it was, as one man, I propose that we resolve ourselves into a corps, and that, out of compliment to the chief of our party, we call it 'THE WONTUS CORPS OF OBSERVATION,' as a slight testimonial of our high regard, confidence, and respect. What say you, gentlemen?"

"I beg of you, gentlemen," cried Mr. Wontus, who was modest, but who, for all that, had his little vanities,—"I beg of you, gentlemen, don't call——"

"Mr. Wilkins, your proposition is a good one," cried Mr. Nidd. "I say 'The Wontus Corps of Observation';" and so it was settled. They drank each other's good health, Mr. Thomson arriving in time to be one of the party, and then Mr. Wontus demanded the story.

"Well, gentlemen, I'll tell you something about myself; but I beg of you not to be curious." And Mr. Wilkins drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and, leaning forward in his chair, commenced a sketch of his life, which properly should have a place of its own.

CHAPTER II.

WHEREIN A REMARKABLE MAN RELATES A REMARKABLE STORY AND ASTONISHES HIS HEARERS.

"It is scarcely necessary," said the narrator, "for me to say that I was born, since the fact of my bein' here is fair evidence of that important fact. I was born, however, in America, but exactly when or where I can't fully determine, for my father was a man of the world, and moved his family frequently; but I think it was somewhere on the coast of New Jersey, since my earliest recollections are associated with sand and the sea. Ours was a numerous family, well known and highly respected, I assure you; in fact, my father once had some idea of being governor of the State, but soon after the idea occurred to him he moved into the State of Delaware, and the idea was practically lost forever. To be brief, soon after takin' up our residence in our new home, my father had the misfortune to be taken down with a fever, and finally handed in his checks. Well, I was the youngest in the family, and, guessin' from that stand-point, I must now be somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty years old.

"As I have before remarked, the family was large, and so each one—we were all boys—was compelled to go to work. I fancied the gay and hardy life of a sailor, and accordin'ly, soon after the old man's death, shipped before the mast in a vessel bound for Spain. I couldn't have been more than fifteen years old at the time, but from that moment a new life, with all its charms and allurements, was spread before me. Our crew wasn't numerous, so, boy that I was, I did man's duty; and, to show you how I succeeded, allow me to relate the first adventure of my life. It seems to me that I was cut out for adventures. But let me to the adventure.

"Perhaps you gentlemen are not familiar with vessels? But no matter. You see we were standin' out of Delaware Bay with a spankin' breeze on our lee quarter; the cook had just served coffee, and I was just commencin' to take my

trick at the tiller, when Captain Coldin', who commanded the *Jane Ann*, came abaft the galley, and, throwin' an eye to windward, remarked that he guessed that we'd have a blow. I looked up, but not bein' much versed in the weather signs at that time, I said nothin,' but kept her close up to the wind. 'Mr. Johnsing,' said the captain, addressin' the first mate, 'what's your 'pinion as to dust?' That's a singular way these seafarin' men have of talkin','' remarked Mr. Wilkins, as his listeners manifested some surprise. "'Shake my eyes,' says the mate, 'but I guess we'll have a spell.' Well, the officers went on talkin' for some time, when all at once the heavens became overcast and the wind blowed great guns. 'Tack, tack!' cried Captain Coldin', as he grasped the taffrail and swung the spanker-boom around on her davits. 'Tack she is!' I shouted; but it wasn't within the power of mortal man to save her. She swung round on her beam like a tub, and plunged a couple of times, and then went down in eighty fathoms of water with every soul on board."

"Oh, dear!" cried Mr. Wontus, with a shudder. "How horrible! And were none of them saved?"

"Where were you?" interrupted Mr. Nidd, incredulously.

"Well," continued Mr. Wilkins, "I had learned to swim before I left home; and, although I was chilled by the water, for it was in November, if I mistake not, I no sooner found that it would be useless to undertake to save the ship or her crew, than I grew selfish, and resolved to save myself. It is singular—perhaps you have noticed it yourself—how a man's thoughts will travel through his head in the short space of a little while, but it is nevertheless true, for, as I sank down, I formed a plan by which I felt that I could save myself; so the moment I struck bottom I says to myself, 'Ben, this is do or die; there's a telegraph cable laid somewhere hereabouts, and if you can find it, why, you can find the shore,'—you see I knew that the other end was fastened to the shore somewhere near one of the light-houses,— so I commenced huntin' around in the mud, and, after considerable trouble, I found it, and hand over hand pulled myself to dry land."

"Just stop there, will you, Mr. Wilkins?" asked Mr. Nidd. "How far from land do you suppose you were when your vessel capsized?"

"About seven miles."

"The cable was lying on the bottom, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you pulled yourself all the way to land by means of the cable?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, now, sir," continued Mr. Nidd, in a decided and matter-of-fact manner, "we would like to know how long you can hold your breath eighty fathoms under water?"

The party all looked at Mr. Wilkins, and that gentleman looked puzzled. The question was evidently a poser and quite unexpected. In a moment his face assumed an air of injured innocence, and he said:

"You see, I didn't hold fast to the cable all the time, but would let go every once in awhile, come to the surface, take a breath, and go down again. That's the way it was. You see there is nothin' astonishin' in that."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Nidd, evidently relieved from a painful doubt.

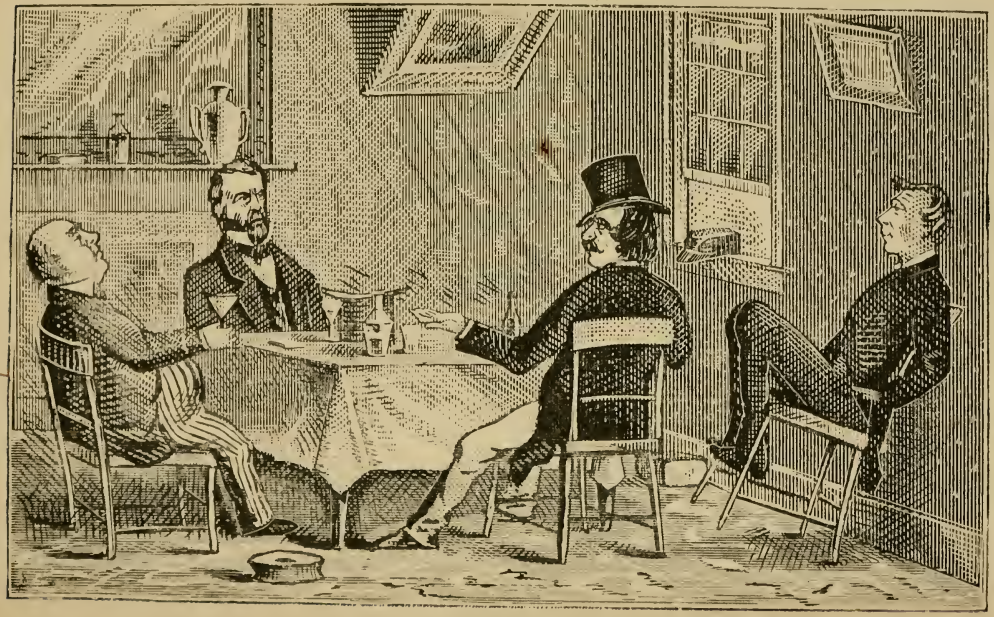
"A most miraculous escape," cried Mr. Wontus. "Take something, Mr. Wilkins; it makes the cold chills crawl up my back to *think* of it."

Why a libation should have such a soothing effect upon man has been a mooted question with the philosophers since the days of Noah, and will continue time without end, and it would be folly for a man to undertake to analyze the causes now. Certain it is, however, that frequent libations invariably make men better or worse than when in their rational, sober senses; and on this occasion even the austere Nidd became more genial and clever than was usual with him.

"But you haven't finished," said Wontus, after the company had sipped their liquor for a few moments in silence.

"By no means," cried Mr. Nidd,—"by no means. Go on, Mr. Wilkins."

"Well, as I was sayin'," continued Mr. Wilkins, "I landed at the light-house, and had just strength enough to crawl to its friendly shelter, when I fainted,—something I never did before or since; and that was the last I knowed until I found myself comfortably tucked in bed, with a bright fire in the hearth and the savory odor of delicious cookin' pervadin' my room. To make a long story short, for the most important part of my life is unspoken as yet, I remained at the light-house



MR. WILKINS TELLS HIS HISTORY.

for some two years as assistant to Mr. Gaddle, the light-keeper, and finally ended by shippin' on a passin' brigantine for Liverpool."

"Did you never hear of the *Jane Ann?*" queried Mr. Wontus, anxiously.

"Nary a word."

"Nor her crew?" asked Mr. Thomson.

"They was never heard of more,—leastwise not by me!"

"Proceed!" commanded Mr. Nidd.

Cleansing his throat, Mr. Wilkins proceeded:

"For me to tell you all that happened to me from that day to this—how I was wrecked on a lonely island, and remained over four years, to be at last picked up by a man-of-war which had lost her course; how I came out safely and again went to Europe, to become a soldier in Her Majesty's Second Royal Infantry; how I fought and bled in the Crimea, and the deeds I done; how I went clear through the Injun rebellion from Tzgampopore to Lucknow, and then walked through Germany and Central Europe—would take more time than we have at our disposal at present."

Mr. Nidd drew a long breath.

"Arrivin' in Holland, I for the first time heard of these domestic convulsions that was disturbin' the equilibrium of society in my native land; and proceedin' at once to Amsterdam, I there learned that the strife had commenced, and men was needed to perpetuate the honor and glory of our government. I had been away from my native land for a long while; but there was always, under all circumstances, a lingerin' love for the home of my childhood, and I resolved to make my way homeward. I was compelled to wait for some days for a vessel, and durin' this time a most unfort'nate accident occurred to me. But I will only state that I had the misfortune to be robbed at my hotel of everything I possessed, and when the vessel was ready to sail, instead of takin' my place in her as a saloon passenger, as would become me,—a man of the world,—I was compelled to ship before the mast."

"A shame!" groaned Mr. Wontus.

"Yes, gentlemen, I felt a little cast down like at my misfortune; but I was used to all sorts of life, and I felt that I would certainly be appreciated when I once had an opportunity to make my value known to the captain. The sailors was all

Dutch, and from the start appeared to take a dislike to me; but when the captain finally took me aft, and made me his confidential clerk, their rage was tremendious. But what mattered that to me? I only asked time to prove to them that I was their best friend; but, alas! that time never came. My duties kept me very busy, for I made out all the reckonin's, kept the log, and so forth, and although we was out nearly two months, yet I never had an opportunity in all that time to approach my messmates. I assure you there was nothin' of pride in the matter on my part. Everything went along smoothly durin' the voyage, and I think we had been out about seven weeks, when one bright mornin' we became becalmed. There we lay a rollin' and pitchin' in the trough of the sea for days, and the thing got monotonous; I felt it myself. The officers raved and the men swore; but it was all of no account,—there wasn't enough wind to tilt a cockle-shell.

"I was brought up a protestant, gentlemen," continued the speaker, "and there never was anything like superstition in my composition. But sailors, as a class, are superstitious, you know, and Dutch sailors particula'ly so; so, when one of the fo'top men said that the reason why we was becalmed was because we had an evil spirit on board, there was a general howl of assent on the fo'castle, and from that moment nothin' would do but that the man, whoever he was, must be chucked overboard. The officers did their best, but everybody was dissatisfied, and the affair resulted in somebody assertin' that *I* was the cause of all the misery, and that *I* should be the man to go into the sea. Well, gentlemen, I was never afraid in my life, and I didn't fear even now; but I certainly did object to the unceremonious way they had of declarin' that I was the man possessed, so I proposed that it wouldn't be anything more than fair for us to draw lots, and the man who drawed the unlucky number should be the man to go overboard. They wouldn't listen to this for a time, but the officers and passengers all said that it wasn't nothin' more than was right, and at last the men had to give in. The arrangements were all made, and the first mate cut the requisite number of papers, and marked one 'unlucky,' and the man who drawed this one was to be considered as guilty of harborin' an evil spirit, and should pay the penalty with his life."

Here Mr. Nidd gave Thomas Thomson a severe kick, and

directed him to snore in a lower key; his high notes were disagreeable. Mr. Thomson took a new position, and settled back into the arms of Morpheus.

The narrator continued:

"The captain put the papers in his hat, and each of the men stepped up and without lookin' drew one of the papers out and handed it to the mate, who looked at it carefully for the word that was to decide the drawer's fate. We had formed a line, and I was about in the middle. It didn't make much difference to me whether I drew the word or not; so, when I walked up, I just stuck my hand carelessly into the hat, drawed a paper, handed it to the mate, and was walkin' aft when I heerd a shout from the men which appeared at that moment like my death-knell. I had drawed the unlucky paper!"

Mr. Wontus groaned, and fortified himself with a small libation.

"I halted, and the mate walked up to me, and handed me the paper. There was no occasion for me to look at it, so I merely remarked that I would be ready in a little while, and then returned to the cabin to finish the ship's work, which I had commenced before goin' to the drawin', and to arrange my own private affairs.

"By the ship's chart, I reckoned that we were at this time somewhere off the coast of South Carolina, and about four hundred miles from land. I had finished the ship's business, and was engaged in writin' a letter home, when I was interrupted by the captain, who came in and said that the men was impatient, and that I must immejiately come on deck. I tore my letter to pieces, and in a moment was on the fo'-castle. The faces of the men were wreathed in smiles of joy; but the officers and passengers looked sorrowful, and as they approached to bid me adieu forever, I noticed the tears tricklin' down the cheeks of more than one brave feller. But while I was receivin' their adieus, it occurred to me that it was my duty to make an effort to save my life, so, signifyin' that I desired to speak, the officers and men drew near, and I commenced:

"'Mates,' says I, 'it has been my misfortune to draw the unlucky paper; but I don't complain. I bow to the rule; but, while I do so, I have a slight boon to ask, which I feel

sure you will gratify me in.' There was a buzz went through the crowd, but I went on. 'What I want,' I said, 'is that you shall give me one of the ship's casks and put me inside. I want some bread, meat, and water; and also that you will give me the bung-hole plug in my hand and leave the bung-hole open. There is but little chance for me to save my life, but still, if you will grant me this request, you shall retain a place in my memory which can't never fade while I live.' Some of the men understood me, and some didn't, but after the officer had translated my remarks I noticed that the men looked as though they would grant my request. 'Let him have what he wants,' cried the boatswain; 'if he leaves the ship all will be well!' 'Yes, let him have it,' echoed some others; and, as there was no objection, the carpenter got out one of the empty casks, and, while the men were getting me the provisions I asked for, the carpenter gave me the bung-plug, put me in the cask, and when I had said good-by to the party, and got my stores, headed up the cask, and I was ready to be tossed overboard.

"Some time elapsed from the time between the headin' up of the cask and the time that it was chucked overboard, which I took advantage of in arrangin' my provisions and water, and decidin' how I would act. I tried the plug, which I held in my hand, into the bung-hole, and it fit spendidly. 'Now,' says I to myself, 'when they cast me overboard, I'll just jam the plug into the hole and hold it there until I come to the surface, when I can take it out, and thus give myself all the air I want; but I must be careful to keep the bung-hole up, or else the water will come in, and I'll be drowned sure."

"Yes, yes, I see," said Mr. Wontus, drawing his chair closer, his face wearing an expression of intense interest.

"I had hardly got my calculations all made, when I felt the cask raised from the deck, carried to the side of the ship, and chucked overboard. I had taken the precaution to jam the plug into the hole, so when the cask went down under the water she rolled some, but I was as dry as we gentlemen are at this moment. The cask didn't remain under the water very long, and when it rose to the surface I pulled the plug out, and thus I was safe and sound,—not so *safe*, but very sound. (Here Mr. W. laughed.) The wind springin' up shortly after, I was left floatin' on the ragin', boundless

ocean, with the slimmest chance for my life that ever mortal man had since the creation of the world. I rather beat old Noah; and I felt it, but I didn't cave, for, says I to myself, 'a man who has passed through what you have, Ben Wilkins, and come out safe, shouldn't never despair.'

"Well, the wind kept on freshenin' until it came to blow a perfect gale. I couldn't see anything, for the bung-hole was my only window, but I knew the sea must be runnin' high from the motion of the cask. The trouble I had is beyond description; but between keepin' the provisions in their places and the bung-hole closed over when the waves rolled over the cask, or *vice versa*, was a job, I tell you. Sometimes the cask would roll clean over, and at them times I had to be mighty spry to keep the water out and at the same time to let enough air in; but I was equal to the task, although I felt weak and faint very often; and when the storm went over, and the sea became more calm, I set to work at gettin' somethin' to eat. There were hams, ship-biscuit, a jar full of water, and some dried fruits and vegetables, and so settin' down, with the bung-hole immejiately over my head, and my provisions between my knees, I managed to make a solid, square meal; and so on I lived for over a week, with nothin' happenin' worth noticin', until one mornin'—I had fallen into a doze—a light wind sprang up and my cask careened to one side. Of course I was awake in a moment, and by shiftin' myself and my provisions I righted her before any damage was done, but, when I came to look, I had lost the plug. (Sensation on the part of the listeners.) Whatever became of that plug I don't know, for I could never find it. So from that time out I was afraid to go to sleep. More days passed,—how many I can't say,—and I was almost perishin' for sleep, and, besides, my provisions commenced to be scarce, and I was compelled to put myself on half rations. It wasn't until now that I commenced to despair. Were there no ships passin' to pick me up, or would they if they did see my barrel? I feared not. Was there no land near? I couldn't see nothin' but the sky. I was thinkin' these things over one afternoon, when the cask gave a sudden heave, and I felt her strike bottom. 'The breakers!' I cried; and from that moment I took heart. Bump, bump, I went, strikin' the ground at every roll of the sea, but I braced my legs against the side of the cask and kept

her level. So on it went for an hour or two, when at length one wave, bigger and heavier than the others, picked me up and throwed the cask upon the sand."

"My, oh!" cried Mr. Nidd, skeptically.

"Terrible! wasn't it?" said Mr. Wontus. "But go on, Mr. Wilkins, go on."

"I felt that I was safe. But fearin' that I might be washed back into the sea again, I doubled myself up, as I had seen the circus actors do at Madrid, and in that way rolled my cask over and over, until I could hear it crushin' the twigs and grass beneath it, and then I felt that I was safe. It makes me shudder even now, gentlemen, when I think over it."

"I should think so!" cried Mr. Wontus; "shouldn't you, Nidd?"

Mr. Nidd volunteered a simple "Uh!" in reply.

"But how did you make out? Where did you find yourself?" asked Mr. Wontus, all interest.

"My glass, if you please," said Mr. Wilkins, with a bland smile.

"Shame, shame, Nidd! *you* ought to have thought of it; here Wilkins hasn't had a drop all this time! Certainly, Mr. Wilkins; drink hearty; your good health, sir." And Wontus helped Wilkins and then helped himself, and both drank.

"Well," said Mr. Wilkins, after having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, "you see I was now in a new fix; to be sure there was no danger of my bein' drowned, but there I was coopered up in the cask, as tight and as fast as if I was so much mess-pork. I tried to break the heads and the sides, but both were too strong for me,—want of sleep and short rations had made me very weak, you know,—so I took to shoutin', and shouted until I was hoarse; but all of no avail, for another day dawned and found me as great a prisoner as ever Baron Trenck was. The sun rose clear and beautiful, and the birds sang their sweetest notes among the trees which surrounded me, but there I was. My cask lay with the bung-hole toward the land, and I could see the green fields and all the other beauties of nature, but no human bein' or habitation. I beat the sides of the cask with fury and shed tears of anger. I couldn't stand it much longer, and for the first time in my life I was commencin' to despair, when, lo! a drove of cattle hove in sight. How I watched them cattle! For a

long while I alternated between hope and fear, but at length—I could not be mistaken—they were comin' toward me. Now, thinks I, these cattle will be attended by a human bein' with whom I can communicate, and then I shall be liberated. I looked again; yes, they were comin' toward me, but oh, how slow! Gradually they approached nearer and nearer, and then, to my great sorrow, I discovered that they were unattended. Now I heard a horn blowin', such as is used in country-places to call the workmen to meals. Heavens! was I to lay here, within sight and hearin' of civilization, after passin' through what I had, and then die of starvation? The thought was madness to me. But I was weak and could not break the walls that surrounded me. I was hoarse and could not call aloud.

"By this time the cattle had come quite near me, and as they walked past, switchin' the flies from their backs, a new thought struck me. What if I could catch one of those long tails and pull it through the bung-hole? Happy thought! Certainly the animal would be frightened and run, and then there would be a chance of the cask bein' broken, and me liberated. I resolved to adopt the plan."

"Glorious idea!" shouted Mr. Wontus, interrupting.

"No spider ever watched his fly with more interest than I did them tails. The animals came and rubbed their noses against the cask, but I wanted the other end, and kept quiet, fearin' that I might frighten them away altogether. At length a fine large bull came up, and after takin' a calm survey of the cask, walked leisurely along by its side and halted. Now was the time! so with fingers ready to seize the tail which occasionally swept past the hole, I waited. The long-looked-for moment came at last, and catchin' hold of the end of the tail, I quickly drew it through the hole, and in a twinklin' had tied a knot in that portion which I had inside. I couldn't see what was bein' done outside, for the tail completely blocked up the hole, but directly I felt the cask move, first gently, then faster, and faster, and faster, until my head reeled, and my bones cracked and ached like a man on the rack. Onward the bull went, tearin' through hedge and field, as though the devil had sent him, and sendin' up such terrific roars as to make the very earth tremble,—at least I should think so. I have no recollection of how he came to stop, for

I am free to confess that I fainted; but the first thing I did know was, that I was surrounded with people, whose voices I could hear but whose language I could not distinguish. Presently, light shone in at the bung-hole, and the knotted end of the bull's tail fell into my hands. Soon after this, blows resounded on the side of the cask, and it was broken open, and in a few moments after, amid exclamations of great wonder, I was lifted out more dead than alive.

"Things—brandy and water—were administered to me, and after awhile I revived sufficient to be able to inquire where I was. The people informed me that I was in the vicinity of Onionville, on the coast of North Carolina, and that I had been brought to my present location by the bull that lay dead by the side of the cask. I looked and there he did lay, sure enough.

"I could have embraced that bull, gentlemen, dead as he was, had I been able, but I wasn't; and as the people insisted on knowin' who I was, and how I came to be in the cask, I related as much of the affair as I thought proper,—for they were a skeptical people and I was afraid to tell them the whole truth, as I have told you,—and after receivin' the mayor and other city authorities who had come out to see me, in fittin' and proper style, I consented to accept the hospitality offered me, and shortly afterward took my place in the chariot, and proceeded to the city. Here I was waited on by the principal citizens, who heard of my wonderful escape from death, and in due course of time recovered my health, and was induced to accept the pastorate of one of the principal churches of the place. Here I remained for some three weeks, beloved by my flock, until it came to be understood that I was a Northern man, and then I was promised a suit of clothes made of feathers and tar, and directed to leave. The inducement was great, but, after a hasty consideration, I concluded to forego the pleasure of wearin' such a suit of clothes, and one evening, with tears of regret, I left, and here I am.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Wilkins, after a pause, "you know the principal points of my history, and I hope it is satisfactory. I have only to add, that I am to be depended on; and while I acknowledge that self-praise is a poor recommendation, yet I take the liberty of tellin' you that I think you have, in securin' me, got the right man in the right place. Finally, should you ever relate to any man what I have just

related to you, and he should doubt it, hand him over to me, and I'll attend to his case with care and consideration."

"My gracious!" cried Mr. Wontus, "but you are really—yes, you are really—but there's Nidd gone to sleep. Nidd, Nidd! I say, come, wake up."

"Is it over?" queried Mr. Nidd, opening his eyes. On being assured that the story was entirely done, Mr. Nidd quietly remarked that he was going home, and accordingly started for the door *sans ceremonie*.

"Remember, Nidd," said Mr. Wontus, "we start for Philadelphia at eight to-morrow morning, so look sharp!"

"All right," said the gentleman. And he passed out of the door, soon to be followed by Messrs. Wilkins and Thomson, who were, on this occasion, to lodge together.

"A wonderful man,—a treasure; a being with a charmed life. Just to think of it, here I am nearly double the age of that fellow, and yet not seen anything. Never mind, my time will come yet." And thus soliloquizing, Mr. Wontus undressed, and sank into slumber, to dream that he had visited the moon, and was to dine with the man in it on the morrow.

CHAPTER III.

STARTS THE CORPS ON ITS WINDING WAY, AND RELATES SOME ACCIDENTS WHICH BEFELL THE TRAVELERS.

The sun had scarcely commenced tinging the eastern horizon with its golden hues, when Mr. Wontus leaped from his couch, and, consulting his watch, hastily dressed himself. Everything was in confusion about the room; trunks and boxes—some that were to go, and some that were to be left behind—were jumbled in confusion in different parts of the room; and Mr. Wontus was in deep distress. He shouted for Tommy to fetch his shaving-water; but there was no response from his usually punctual servant. Mr. Wontus's anger did not have the slightest effect on the man; and that very moment the servant was regaling himself with sundry "smiles," in company with Mr. Wilkins, in the bar-room

below, where they had spent the entire night drinking to the health, wealth, and prosperity of Mr. Wontus, who they both declared was the best man in the world, and who, by the way, was to settle for the liquor they were drinking. The arrival of Mr. Gascon Nidd put an end to their amusement, as it also did to the rather forcible language of Mr. Wontus.

Both the servant and Mr. Wilkins were very drunk when they presented themselves; but there was no time to lose, and, at the risk of numerous necessary articles being left behind, both of the worthies were hustled into the express-wagon, and were quickly followed by such baggage as had been arranged the day previous; Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd each lending his assistance in handling the trunks and boxes. At length the wagon rattled away from the door, and Mr. Wontus returned to the bar-room to bid his landlord adieu.

With a final shake of the hand Mr. Wontus parted from the generous Mr. Diddler, and the carriage, containing Mr. Wontus and his friend, rumbled through the streets to the ferry, where the duo which had preceded them waited.

Thus far everything had progressed rather favorably, and Mr. Wontus and the other members of the corps had scarcely taken their seats in the cars when the little trials and incidents were dismissed from Mr. Wontus's mind, and he devoted himself to an inspection of surrounding objects, while Mr Nidd settled himself back in his seat and buried his face in the morning newspaper. Messrs. Thomson and Wilkins had taken an end seat, and having planted their feet on the seat in front of them, which I presume is an indication of serene independence, settled themselves to sleep.

The day was bright and pleasant, and Mr. Wontus gave full sway to his feelings, and was heard to remark, as the cars sped along, that "it was worth living for." Now, exactly what Mr. Wontus considered as worth living for will perhaps never be positively known; but he looked so perfectly contented that any one possessed with a fair share of the milk of human kindness would have considered it cruel to disturb him.

A halt. Passengers got out and in; among the latter a rather corpulent lady, with a very red face, and numerous boxes and baskets; who, after taking a survey of the different faces, ventured to sit down by the side of Mr. Wontus. To that gentleman's credit be it said, he was very gallant to

the ladies on most occasions, and on this one he not only screwed himself up into the smallest possible proportions, but he absolutely—whether through necessity or not I am unable to say—took one of the baskets on his knees.

"Mr. Nidd!" cried Mr. Wontus, leaning back and talking over his shoulder to that gentleman, who had taken a seat behind him, "it's a long while since I passed over this road before. Why, it was long before I quit business; and now everything seems strange to me. What place was that we just passed through? I think the conductor called it Baldeytown; but those fellows speak so indistinctly that it is impossible to understand what they do say."

"Bordintown, sir!" shouted the corpulent lady by his side, in tones loud and shrill enough to draw the attention of all the passengers in the coach.

"Yes, ma'am; thank you!" cried Mr. Wontus; and then turning to Nidd, he added, in a low tone:

"In the name of all that is good, don't ask any questions. What place did she say it was? I was so taken aback that I could not understand."

Mr. Nidd gave him the desired information; but whether the corpulent lady had taken offense at what Mr. Wontus had said, or whether she had misunderstood what he said, will probably never be known; but no sooner had Wontus turned his attention to surrounding objects again than the lady commenced acting as though her seat had suddenly become uncomfortable. Mr. Wontus compressed himself still smaller.

"Mister!" cried the lady, emphasizing the noun, "p'raps my company ain't agreeable?"

"Nothing of the kind, madam, I assure you," cried Mr. Wontus, smiling blandly.

"Give me that!" shouted the lady. And, snatching the basket which he had so kindly been holding on his knees for the past two hours, wanted to know if Mr. Wontus "hadn't come out to put on airs with poor folks."

"Madam," cried Mr. Wontus, beseechingly, "I assure you that nothing was said by my friend or myself to offend the most delicate ears. I would rather——"

"'Madam!' Don't madam me, you old reprobate!" interrupted the lady. "I'm no *ma-dam*, sir. You've made a mistake, sir. I've seen your kind of folks before. Folks may

talk about the 'moralizin' effects of the war, and you look like one of them; and you're the first man I've seen—*man!* did I say? No, sir, you're no man, or you would never think of insultin' a lone woman who was tryin' to do you a favor. You, you——" The lady could stand it no longer; her face had become redder and redder as she progressed, and now the veins in her forehead threatened to burst. Drawing her handkerchief from her pocket, she buried her face in it.

Mr. Wontus, during the delivery of this tirade, had sat perfectly immovable, and was the observed of all observers. He looked over his shoulder at Mr. Nidd, but that gentleman was absorbed in his newspaper; his assistants were asleep; there was no sympathy anywhere. He looked out of the window, and then quickly turning, as though a sudden thought had occurred to him, he stood up in his seat, thrusting one foot out toward the aisle, was about stepping past his companion, whose face was still buried in the folds of the handkerchief, when a sudden jolt of the car unsettled his equilibrium, and down went the extended foot into one of the boxes of the lady, and Mr. Wontus seated himself rather unceremoniously, and with a sudden jerk, in her lap. Consternation is not the word to depict the scene that followed. It was at once awfully and woefully exciting. The corpulent lady screamed murder, and Mr. Wontus made frantic efforts to release himself from the unpleasant and rather ridiculous situation, but the room between Mr. Wontus's knees and the seat before him, and the almost interminable mass of boxes and baskets at his feet, acted as an effectual stopper to his best intentions. He struggled; the lady struggled and shouted; the passengers assembled about them. Mr. Nidd stood up in his seat and shook his head dolefully.

"Go it, old hoss!" shouted one passenger.

"You're doing right well for a man of your age," laughed another.

"Why, the lady seems to like it," said another.

"Mr. Nidd," said Wontus, ceasing his efforts for a moment, and looking at that gentleman with mingled rage and supplication, "will you help me out of this, sir?"

"I'll help you out!" shouted the lady, and instantly there fell upon Mr. Wontus's devoted head such a shower of blows as to induce him to redouble his efforts, and finally to throw

himself, panting and sore, into a vacant seat on the other side of the car. How much further progress this scene might have made cannot be said, for the train had arrived at Camden, and everybody, including the corpulent lady, who kept up a constant scream of invectives addressed to all brutish beasts, but Mr. Wontus in particular, busied themselves in collecting their baggage and leaving the cars. At last Mr. Wontus and party were all that was left. Mr. Nidd stood in the aisle looking at Mr. Wontus, while Thomson and Wilkins sat upright, rubbing their eyes. As for Mr. Wontus, his spirit seemed to be crushed, and he sat, with his hand to his head, gazing listlessly out of the window; he was wrapped in deep meditation.

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor as the ferry-boat bell tapped for the last time.

"Come, boys," cried Mr. Nidd, "assist your master from the cars." The boys did as they were bid, and Mr. Wontus suffered himself to be led to the boat without a word. His fellow-passengers indulged in some facetious remarks as he passed, but he was immovable, and sat looking at one object, like the enchanted people whom I recollect to have read about when a boy.

The Quaker City, with its row after row of brick houses, rising one above the other like steps, was reached, and it now became Mr. Wilkins's duty to secure quarters for the party, for Mr. Wontus declared that he would go no farther just now,—perhaps never,—and he begged of Mr. Nidd never to mention to any living person the scene that had taken place in the cars.

With the party temporarily quartered on the river, in a quarter of the town not calculated to impress any one with the beauty or cleanliness of the place, Mr. Wilkins drew an advance on his month's salary and started out in search of other lodgings, as it had been finally decided that the party should remain for a time in Philadelphia.

That Mr. Wilkins should feel himself perfectly at home in Philadelphia is not to be wondered at when we remember, first, that he is a man of the world, and second, that his varied experiences have given him such a familiarity with men and things as to make him perfectly at home anywhere. So without deigning to ask his way, he jammed his hands into his pockets and walked up Walnut Street to the Exchange.

Here, as was more common then than now, all was bustle and excitement, and, after refreshing himself with numerous potations of the great national drink—whisky—he sauntered out among the car-drivers and other gentry, such as generally congregate about that locality. His happiness was entirely too great for him to enjoy alone; but, after two or three fruitless attempts to cultivate acquaintances, he secured the company of a gentleman of fine military bearing, who introduced himself over a glass, as Major Flick, of Indiana, at present on duty in Philadelphia, as a special officer of the government on secret service. Mr. Wilkins was delighted to make such a distinguished acquaintance,—wouldn't the major be persuaded to take just one more. The major was persuaded; and then Mr. Wilkins confidentially informed him that he, too, was on secret service, but in the employ of a private party, and with many mysterious winks and nods proceeded to add that he was now out in search of lodgings for himself and party. With many more winks and nods from the major, that individual said that he understood, and would be delighted to be of service to his friend.

"You're not acquainted in the city?" queried the major.

"Oh, yes," cried Mr. Wilkins; and then, pausing a moment, he added: "That is, I was here some years ago; but I suppose things have changed very much since then, major?"

"Considerably! Will you have a cigar, Mr.— Mr. ——. What *is* your name? Indeed, I've forgotten."

"Wilkins, sir,—Benjamin Wilkins, formerly of Jersey, but now—now, major, a man of the world."

"I'm glad I've met you, Mr. Wilkins. I'll call you Ben, if you have no objections.

"No objections in the least, major; I'm a common man like yourself. Allow *me* to pay for them cigars."

The major allowed him.

"So your party is at Hodgood's temporarily, eh? Well, never mind, there will be plenty of time an hour hence for you to look for new quarters for them. Have you ever seen the noble old State House, where the Declaration of Independence was framed and proclaimed, and where Jefferson and his compeers fought the battle that has made us the great nation that we are? What a pity it is," cried the major, after a brief pause, "that we—I mean the whole country—

haven't got the same kind of material in the councils of our nation! They—they were Southern men, Mr. Wilkins,—Ben, I mean,—but to-day, alas! they are no more. I'm a Southron myself, sir; would you believe it?"

"Certainly, major, certainly. I took your measure the moment I clapped my eyes on you. What's your tonnage?"

"Come," said the major, rising, without appearing to hear Mr. Wilkins's query, "we will take a walk up, and have a squint at the State House."

"Certainly!" cried Mr. Wilkins, and arm-in-arm they started off together.

"'E's a rum chap that," said a burly Englishman to a companion, as the gentlemen passed out of the door; "but the major'll fix 'im, I'll warrant. 'E's a coon, is the major!"

Turning up Third Street, and passing the newspaper offices, which were besieged with anxious crowds, waiting to hear the latest news from the front, and turning up Chestnut Street, Mr. Wilkins found numerous things to admire and excite his curiosity, and in course of conversation remarked to the major that it wasn't so much of a village after all.

In due time the precincts of the State House were reached, and as the major discoursed learnedly on the ancient appearance of the structure, and the many deeds of glory it had witnessed, Mr. Wilkins was filled with so much pleasure that nothing would satisfy him but a little more—one more—indulgence; and the major consented.

[It should not be understood that Mr. Wilkins had missed the opportunity of an acquaintance with the major to ventilate some of his own little peculiarities in the wonderful line, for he did ventilate them whenever opportunity offered; but as he frequently appears in the course of this narrative, we have thought proper to merely trace him in his travels in search of lodgings.]

Major Flick was one of that sort of men that all cities are possessed of. No one knew from whence he came or how he lived. He had grown to be an institution in certain localities, and was as regular in his habit of appearing at certain places, at certain times, as the most attentive merchant. Early in the morning the vicinity of Dock and Water Streets—a thriving locality for certain questionable characters of both sexes as well as other people—saw him ere he brushed the cobwebs

from his throat. A little later he graced the pavement in front of the State House, where he met the men who govern the city, and where he hobnobed, drank, and lunched with the rulers with that ease and freedom which I learn is an inherent right in all who assist in lubricating the cumbrous machinery of a city government. In brief, he might be called a politician, for it was whispered among his associates, and hence reached the ears of the patriots who were willing to assume the grave responsibilities and toil of public office, that he carried such and such a division in his pocket, and if he had carried a whole congressional district about him he certainly could not have been more respected among his associates. His clothes were of last season's fashion, and were unduly polished in some places, but withal he was imposing. His complexion was dark, and his regular features were surrounded by heavy, black whiskers, which, together with his erect bearing and particular poise of the head, gave him that peculiar air which men are apt to fancy only belongs to military gentlemen. That the major had ever been in the army is questionable, but the war had given him the opportunity of making something of himself (in a manner not in the general acceptance of the term), and hence he became major more by virtue of his military appearance than by his prowess. It was a custom of the times for all men, of a peculiar class, to make the most of whatever fell in their way, and the major was with them heart and soul. I may be excused for mentioning here that fortunately these men were in a striking minority, so far as numbers were concerned; had it been otherwise, the flag which they hurrahed so lustily for, when all was bright, might have been dragged and trampled in the dust without their stirring a foot to prevent it. But they were powerful then, and will continue to be powerful just so long as the respectable and retiring tax-payers of the land choose to allow them to be,—and that may be forever. But I digress.

The Hall of Independence, with its ancient pictures, or pictures of ancient men, was gone through; the old bell with its prophetic inscription was gazed at; and the chair and the pew used by the immortal Washington, were all displayed to the enraptured vision of Mr. Wilkins, and duly expatiated on by the major. But the crowning feature of the day was yet to come: the steeple was to be visited; and armed with due

authority,—it is passing strange that any man can secure a ticket to visit the steeple by asking for it, and yet cannot visit the steeple without it!—the party passed up the winding, dirty, rickety stairs, and were rewarded for their trouble, when at the top, by a fine view of the city. Stretching far away beyond the power of sight, with the naked eye, to the north, west, and south, lies the city, with its regular streets, smoking chimneys, and toy-like houses; while on the east and south-west run the rivers, glittering like silver threads in the sunlight. "Not so much village," muttered Mr. Wilkins, after contemplating the picture for a time in silence.

"Not so much," replied the major; and the gentlemen returned to *terra firma*, to again meet hosts of the major's friends, and indulge in many toasts to their friends and confusion to their enemies. Darkness at length found Mr. Wilkins, somewhat under the influence of liquor and still searching for lodgings, wending his way down Dock Street, with his hand resting on the arm of his friend, and indulging in the relation of sundry little episodes, which made both gentlemen laugh most uproariously. Down Dock, until that street became a part of Spruce Street, the worthies wended their way; thence into Water Street, and thence into one of the numerous lodging-houses, where the sign "Boarding, Wine, and Liquors," gives the weary traveler to understand that he can be at once lodged, fed, and refreshed. Into these establishments, kept generally by men of low character, the general drift of the river and the town found its way. They always remind me of the eddies in the river formed by a juting of land, or other obstacle, wherein all the scum and filth which floats on the surface of the water is caught, twirled round and round as if on inspection, and then allowed to float on, soon to be followed by more and more until the end of time.

The room into which the major ushered his friend Mr. Wilkins was cramped. The ceiling was low, and the atmosphere was thick with the fumes of liquor and tobacco smoke. A high counter traversed the back part of the room, behind which were arrayed bottles, glasses, lemons, and such other paraphernalia common to all bar-rooms, not to forget the picture of Noah's Ark, with the animals and birds just in the act of entering it, flanked by the time-honored portraits of

Washington and Paul Jones. A motley assemblage of perhaps a dozen filled the room. Here sat the half-drunken sailor, with unkempt hair and disfigured countenance, flanked on either side by the stool-pigeons of the landlord, whose business is to see that Jack judiciously spends all his money in a proper manner—which is highly improper in a moral sense—in the shortest possible time, that he may be reshipped, and his "advance" consumed by the loving landlord before he shall have had the chance of becoming food for other sharks, or been maimed for life by the master of the ship with whom he sails,—all of which has since been altered by a wholesome law. The longshore-man, with cadaverous eyes and ruddy complexion, sits opposite, rising only from his chair at regular intervals to quaff the villainous mixture set before him, and for which he pays with the proceeds of sundry ropes and bits of ironmongery which a vessel had lost the night before, and which found its way to the junk-shop ere the sun was an hour high.

Woman lends her soothing influence and presence, and the haggard faces, sunken eyes, and colorless lips speak of a life of debauchery and crime.

The landlord, an Englishman of rotund form, dark complexion, close-cropped hair, and lustreless, fishy eyes, stands leaning on the bar, and watches with the keenest interest the proceedings of the assemblage before him, lest at some unpropitious moment there shall be a moiety of the hard-earned cash of his customers that will slip into other hands than his. All, all is his!

As the major and his friend stepped into the room, and the landlord caught sight of the rather genteel-looking Mr. Wilkins, his fishy eyes brightened and his lips parted.

"Good-even', major; I'm glad to set eyes on you. Ah!—a friend?"

"Good-evening, Tommy, my boy!" returned the major, grasping the fat, purple hand of the landlord, and shaking it vigorously. "My friend, Mr. Wilkins."

"I'm glad to see you, sir." And then followed a hearty handshaking between Mr. Wilkins and the landlord, and sundry knowing winks between the latter and the major, after which the landlord passed behind the counter, and with a business-like flourish set out the glasses.

"What will it be, gents?"

The query was lost on Mr. Wilkins, for with his chin on his breast and that stupid gaze peculiar to a person in a state of semi-intoxication, that gentleman was taking a survey of the premises and the people, as became a man of the world. The question was repeated, and aided by a nudge from his companion, Mr. Wilkins at length swung around and pronounced the word "w—hisky!"

"The same," said the major. "Perhaps you'll join us?" this was addressed to the landlord.

"Hi never drink in my own 'ouse," replied that most virtuous gentleman; and then added, in a whisper, intended only for the major's ear, "Fresh fish?"

"Secret service," whispered the major; and seeing that Mr. Wilkins was again interested in the company, he added: "Full of cash?"

"No tricks, major; it won't do 'ere, you know."

Mr. Wilkins drew a chair to the side of one of the ladies and entered into a vivid description of his experience as a man of the world and the responsibilities of his present mysterious duty.

"What's 'is lay?" asked the host.

"Sh——," whispered the major; "that's what I want to find out." And then a conversation ensued between the major and the landlord, which plainly indicated that the English gentleman was interested in the recruiting business, and that an effort should be made to hold Mr. Wilkins over until the next morning, and, if satisfactory, Mr. Wilkins should enlist in one of the many offices then open for that purpose, and the bounty due him should be shared between the agents. [At this time the bounties, both national and local, were small, and the *business* of manufacturing recruits had not arrived at that condition of perfection which followed at a later day, although fairly understood and practiced by a few of the vampires who preyed upon the unsuspecting public.]

Mr. Wilkins, encouraged by the smiles and graces of his fair companion, had slid gracefully from the historic to the sentimental; his hand had stolen around her waist, and his lips were alarmingly close to her damask cheek; words of love and fidelity poured from his lips like the limpid water of a gushing streamlet. His fortunes should be hers; his boundless estates

in the Raratonga Islands should be hers if she would fly with him. She smiled and returned evasive answers to his heated questions. He became vehement, and, at a moment most unfortunate, threw his disengaged hand around her neck, and, drawing her toward him, imprinted a kiss upon her lips which sounded like the crack of a whip-lash. At this juncture the landlord, who had been watching the scene with eyes glowing like living coals, and whose bosom was evidently filled with a deep-seated and overpowering jealousy, advanced with hasty strides to the side of Mr. Wilkins, and, with one tremendous blow, felled that gentleman to the floor like an ox struck by the axe of a butcher.

"Murder!" shouted the major, without disturbing his attitude at the counter. "Murder!" screamed the ladies. "Murder!" shouted the landlord, throwing open the door and giving Mr. Wilkins's prostrate form a sounding kick as he did so. "Fight! fight!" shouted the rabble in the street, and everybody seemed highly amused at the prospect. What *might* have occurred is simply a matter of conjecture, for three vigilant guardians of the public peace soon made their appearance on the scene, and, after the landlord had explained how Mr. Wilkins had ferociously tried to murder one of the beautiful young ladies, which assertion was backed up by a chorus of voices, including Major Flick's, and how he had only been prevented from fulfilling his blood-thirsty intentions by the timely interference of the landlord, the prostrate and senseless form of Mr. Wilkins was dragged from the house and thence to the police station, where it was thrust into a cell, to await the charge which would be sworn to before the police magistrate by the landlord at the hearing in the morning.

CHAPTER IV.

DETAILS HOW AN AMBITIOUS MAN MAY PERMIT HIS AMBITION TO LEAD HIM INTO GREAT AND UNLOOKED-FOR DIFFICULTIES.

Mr. Wontus had recovered his accustomed good spirits, and after being tired with inspecting the shipping on the river, suggested that he and Nidd should proceed to see some of the sights of the city. Mr. Nidd being in an agreeable mood, accepted the suggestion, and after dinner—they dined at one o'clock—the gentlemen set out, leaving Thomas Thomson to await the arrival of Mr. Wilkins. But it is not my intention to follow our hero, but to devote a few pages to no greater person than Thomas Thomson.

The refreshing sleep which Tommy had enjoyed in the cars, together with the newness of his situation, naturally created in his rather inquiring disposition a desire to see more than could be found in the limits of a hotel sitting-room, and Mr. Wontus's coat-tail had scarcely vanished from the doorway when Mr. Thomson stretched himself and walked to the window. Here he gazed for a long time at the wagons, drays, and crowds of busy people who kept passing him; presently he buttoned his coat and crammed his hands to the very bottom of his pantaloons pockets. Evidently there was something on his mind. He drew his hands from his pockets and raised the window and looked up and down the street; he drew his head in and shut the window down; then he balanced himself, first on one foot, then on the other. This he repeated many times, and then finally spreading his legs out so that they formed the letter V inverted, he again thrust his hands into his pockets and stood gazing into the street.

"Harm?" said he, speaking to himself, "of course there ain't no harm in it. Why, I won't stay two minutes." And he collected his feet together and walked out to the sidewalk. Here he stood for some time as if in doubt. He gazed up and down, when suddenly something down the street attracted his

attention and he followed his desires, and did not cease walking until he had reached the oyster dock, a square from the hotel.

Be it remembered that Thomas Thomson was a most loving and faithful subject, although his mind was a little clouded at times, and that in all his term of years in the service of Mr. Wontus he had been most obedient, honest, and faithful. To be sure, Mr. Wontus's wants were not so extravagant or so fashionable but that a plain, unlettered man like Thomas Thomson suited him, and for his fidelity Mr. Wontus had at different times rewarded him, besides giving him very fair wages. Mr. Thomson was, to the best of his own knowledge and belief, an orphan; and as his wants were few and easily satisfied, he had managed to stow away his money from time to time, until now he considered himself a man of almost boundless wealth, and a part of this wealth, consisting of some two hundred dollars, he had brought with him, more for Mr. Wontus's use than for his own, for he frequently said to himself, "Maybe he'll get out some time, and then I'll make him open his eyes by offerin' to lend him some." That he might not appear poor when in company, he generally carried some money about him, and at the time of his wandering along the oyster docks he had in his pockets four five-dollar notes, a two-dollar note, and some small change, amounting in all to about twenty-three dollars.

The scene was new to him, and he watched the oyster dealers and the people who came to buy with great interest. He looked at the shallops, as they rolled and dipped with each successive wave; and, as he had never been on a boat of this kind in his life, he stepped aboard of one of them, and permitted himself to enjoy the easy, swaying motion. Crowds of men were passing from vessel to vessel, engaged in showing their oysters to customers, and when tired of holding part of the rigging to keep himself from falling into the water, Mr. Thomson fell into a passing bevy of gentlemen, who appeared to be in a high good humor, and followed them to the wharf. Once ashore, he became more confident than he had been while on the vessel, and without knowing, or, in fact, caring, he followed the gentlemen into a neighboring saloon, and while there engaged in inspecting the pictures on the walls, he was invited and pressed to take something. It was a new thing for Mr.

Thomson to be asked to imbibe by a stranger, and he felt highly elated and complimented. He felt as though something was expected of him, and placing his hat, which was new, on the side of his head, he thanked the gentlemen, and drank his liquor with as much gusto as the best of them.

He had long desired to be one of those free-and-easy fellows who pass as gentlemen, and it now occurred to him that here was an opportunity to distinguish himself; and, forgetting for the time that such a being as Mr. Wontus ever lived, he entered into a conversation with the man behind the bar for a few minutes, and ended that conversation by insisting that all the gentlemen should join him. The company was of that convivial character which one often finds in places where he is least expecting it, and the gentlemen were all watermen, in one way or other, and possessed to a considerable extent that sociability and, I may add, capacity for which this class is celebrated throughout the wide world. The man behind the bar vouchsafed the information that the gentlemen had just completed a fine bargain in the sale of a certain steamboat, and were jolly good fellows. Mr. Thomson was delighted, and, with spirits somewhat elevated, he again insisted on the gentlemen joining him in a "sociable." And they did, each raising his glass and drinking the good health of Mr. Thomson.

"My name is Birkill," said one of the gentlemen, stepping up and extending his hand. "Excuse me, sir, but I didn't hear yours."

Mr. Thomson took the extended hand in his. The gentlemen shook hands and were acquainted.

Mr. Birkill was a man measuring, say about five feet seven in height, and would weigh in the neighborhood of a hundred and fifty pounds, certainly nothing under. He had a round head, probably as broad as it was long, and his complexion was inclined to be light, though exposure to the weather had bronzed it. His face was as round as his head, and his features corresponded with everything else about him: they were moderately prominent, and were well displayed by the close cropping of his hair. His eyes were of a grayish cast, surface-like, but twinkling, and his manner was such that a close observer would be apt to put him down a man of wonderful aptitude in whatever direction he chose to throw his energy. In conversation he was rather more inquiring than communicative; he never made a

flat denial of anything, yet there was a degree of cynicism about him that always assumed an amusing phase, whether in earnest or in jest; in a word, he belonged to that class of men who, while they impress us with their manners, invariably leave doubts in our mind as to their sincerity.

"Jones," cried Mr. Birkill, "an old friend." And Mr. Thomson was introduced to Mr. Jones. "Smith, Brown, Cap'n Huskins, Walker, Magdus, Lorton," continued Mr. Birkill, introducing the different gentlemen. "Lamber, McMinigan, Outslager — damn it, gentlemen, this is Mr. Thomson, introduce yourselves." And the different gentlemen of the party, to the number of a dozen, stepped up and shook hands with Thomas Thomson, for they were in a merry mood, and would have shaken hands with a wooden tobacco sign had one been presented. The party became thoroughly homogeneous ere long, and the liquor was poured frequently; they were jolly to a man, and Mr. Thomson was so far in his cups as not to care, even if he did remember that Mr. Wontus would be looking for him. To his credit be it said, that he *intended* to return to the hotel, but somehow or another every time he set about doing so an invisible and irresistible hand took hold of his coat-tail and pulled him back.

I have never known exactly how "merry a marriage-bell" was, but since it has become the stereotyped phrase in all descriptions of gatherings, I may be excused for following the example of other writers and saying that everything went along

"As merry as a marriage-bell."

Still Thomas Thomson lingered. He was treated with distinguished consideration and many of his remarks loudly applauded by the company, led by Mr. Birkill. He had been a witness to many amusing times like the present, he said, but he never knew that there was so much real pleasure about them. Mr. Magdus assured him that this was an exceptionable time,—that the company were all perfect gentlemen, and it was probable that the same thing would never happen again. The landlord spread a lunch in an adjoining room, and the gentlemen were invited in. As they entered the door Captain Huskins, a man of large size and herculean form, stood in the doorway and compelled each to take off his hat and bow to the picture of Washington. All were seated at the board,

the hats deposited on a little table which stood in the corner. They ate, drank, and sang patriotic songs, and Mr. Thomson became easier in his manner as the affair progressed. He already felt that he was a gentleman.

"Tum-diddle-tum, diddle-dum-dum-dum!" shouted Mr. Birkill, arising from his chair, seizing a hat, and marching around the room in military style. "Trat-de-tat-de-tat-tat-ta!" shouted Mr. Smith, following suit, and marching into the bar-room. Captain Huskins now arose, and taking his well-worn hat from the pile on the table, cut the rim so as to leave a visor in front. "That's the style!" shouted the captain, and striking his rather well-developed stomach vigorous blows in imitation of the artist who performs on that most melodious instrument, the bass drum, he became a member of the military corps of Mr. Birkill.

The captain's hat excited a new interest; it had a unique, semi-military appearance, and was just the style for the occasion. Brooms and sticks were added, and soon the entire company was adorned with hats like the captain's. There was no respect paid to right or justice in the selection of the hats, but each gentleman seized the first one that came to hand; new and old, large and small, found customers, and not with any regard to the "eternal fitness of things" either. Thus Mr. Birkill, whose head was round, wore a hat that was long and narrow, while Mr. McMinigan, whose head was very small, wore a hat intended for a man with a very large head. Thomas Thomson was not so drunk but that he thought of his new tile, but it was bereft of its rim and perched on Mr. Jones's head. There was a hat left, and Thomson, believing that it was his bounden duty, took it and joined the procession, most of which was composed of musicians, and everybody in a high good humor. But it was suddenly discovered that there wasn't room enough in the house, and with drawn sword, Captain Huskins formed the troops into line and addressed them:

"This here time," said the captain, "is beared down with monstrous interests, which must and shall be kept up. [Cheers.] Me noble warriors, your looks speak your determination [loud applause] to follow me [cries of "We'll elect you!" and applause] and never desert your—your liquor. [Sensation.] You are here—I see it in your eyes—straighten up there, Smith—

and I tell you—I tell you—yes, gentlemen [applause], I tell you——"

The captain was evidently in want of words.

"Let the band play!" cried Birkill, relieving the captain, and instantly the trat-de-tat, tum-diddle-de-dum, and other sounds, intended for imitations of various musical instruments, sounded from all the voices, and most effectually put a stop to further remarks from the captain.

"Right face!" commanded the captain, "forward—march!" and the party stepped off in true military style, with the line a little zigzag.

"Here, this here way," cried the captain, as the head of the line reached the bar. "No chargin' till the word's give." And the line faced about and marched down the room again. Mr. Thomson thought the fun was grand, and he laughed immoderately.

"To the right flank there!" commanded the captain, whose knowledge of military tactics and evolutions was rather limited. "Now, square around. Here, you Smith, get back; throw your eyes to the right and dress. A little back, Mr. Thomson, if you please. Now then, me braves, before you lies the foe; we conquer to-night, or to-morrow Mrs. Huskins' a widow—charge!" With a shout the line rushed forward; the bar was stormed and capitulated unconditionally.

"Faces aft!" cried the captain, as the gentlemen deposited their glasses after emptying them of their contents. "Port there a little, Birkill,—blarst your soldier lingo, I can't go it. Now then, march!—this way, gentlemen," and the party poured forth into the street. Down the avenue the motley platoon marched. South Street was reached; "Larboard!" cried the captain, adding: "I've run a steamboat for twenty years,—blarst me if it ain't the only talk that tells after all." The platoon filed to the left and marched on board the ferry-boat, and without accident were conveyed to Gloucester, where the party disembarked, and, in battle array, marched through the town, to the great wonder of some and amusement of others.

[As the readers of these pages may be inclined to think that some portions of this narrative are overdrawn, and hence false, we desire to add our testimony to the truth of everything herein contained. Who the historian of the "Wontus Corps of Observation" was we are unable to say; but a patient pe-

MR. WONTUS MAKES A MISTAKE.

rusal of the MSS. which have passed into our hands leads us to the belief that he has endeavored to be as fair as he is truthful, and that the scenes and men which he speaks of—or men and scenes like them—have come under the observation of most men who dwell in cities, and who move about, observe, and note the incidents of the day.—PUB.]

"Halt!" commanded Captain Huskins, himself unable to execute the command without the assistance of a friendly fence-post. "Luff there a little, Outslager. Now, boys, here's the enemy." And as he spoke, he pointed with his sword to a neighboring house, which had painted, in red, white, and blue letters, on the window,

THE WEARY TRAVELERS REST

"And now, gents, do your duty."

The captain evidently did not lack the courage to lead his men, for he made divers efforts to start, but the fence-post clung to him so tenaciously that he was finally compelled to throw himself at full length on the ground. The captain down, the military line at once became a mass.

"To the rescue!" shouted Mr. Birkill.

No attention was paid to the order, until Mr. Thomas Thomson made his appearance in the front rank and offered his assistance in raising the captain.

"Certainly, certainly, Mr. Thomson,—without the 'p', I believe, sir,—I am glad you're come to the rescue of our beloved commander. Lift him up; convey him to yonder friendly shelter, and you shall receive a handsome reward—in heaven."

Mr. Thomson's will was strong, but his joints were weak; and the more he undertook to lift the captain up, the more he fell down himself. Exhausted, he at length stretched himself by the side of his commander, and vowed he would stay there. Such fidelity is rare, and the observing Birkill, who during the time that the private was endeavoring to raise his captain was sobering the men up by a vigorous course of tactics, noticed the condition of affairs, demanded the assistance of the company in conveying the wounded to the "Weary Traveler's Rest." "You shall be promoted," he whispered to Thomas, as he assisted in putting that personage on his feet.

"The Weary Traveler's Rest" had been duly invested by the

party, who, after partaking of the planked shad, for which the town has been celebrated, paid their reckoning, and were prepared to vacate the place, when, upon vote, it was agreed that they should pay their respects to the establishment of a gentleman whose tent stood on the street leading to the ferry, and who had on exhibition a fat woman, a thin man, an anaconda, a goat with five legs, and sundry other curiosities; all of which could be seen for the small sum of ten cents. The resolution passed, the party started, under the command of Mr. Birkill, who took the place of Captain Huskins, by reason of that gentleman's declination to serve in that capacity, and who exalted Mr. Thomson by promoting him to sergeant, and presenting him with a lockless musket.

"Forward—march!" cried the new captain. And, with the usual rat-tat-tat, the party moved off, Thomas Thomson leading, his hat ornamented with a plume, and his musket by his side. "File right!" And the showman's tent was reached.

"Captain," said Mr. Birkill, halting his command, and saluting the showman in true military style, "we wish to enter this show."

"Ten cents apiece, gents. The greatest living curiosities, secured at an enormous expense——"

"Hold up!" interrupted Mr. Birkill, "we want in!"

"Ten cents, gents!"

"Couldn't you lump it an' make it fifty for the lot? Wery interestin' crowd, you see."

"Ten cents, sir; it ought to be twenty-five. No such curiosities to be seen anywhere else——"

"Hold up!" cried Mr. Birkill, again interrupting. "Can't you be persuaded?"

"No, sir."

"Ain't there no inducements we could offer except payin' the price?"

"No, sir."

"You won't lump it and let us in for half price, bein' it's a crowd?"

"Can't do it, gents." And the showman went on expatiating on the beauties of his curiosities.

"Face around here, fellers," said Mr. Birkill. And the line spread itself out before him, in all the magnitude it could muster.

"Rum'ns, feller-citizens, and me braves," said he, tragically, "I'm agoin' to address you. I'm your Mark Antony; but it's not for the likes of me to excite your passions; more better should I counsel peace, which I do." Hear me for our sake, that you who do hear may come to the right understandin' of this here grievous wrong which has been done you'ns. This here man is your Brutus; and he's an hon'rable man, as hon'rable men goes in these here times; but I would put to him a question." Mr. Birkill assumed a still more tragic attitude, and, turning to the showman, said:

"Can these here gentlemen, all rum'ns, go into this here show, or not?"

"I have already answered that question, sir."

"Then they can't go in?"

"Not without paying the admittance fee."

Turning to his men, Mr. Birkill continued:

"Rum'ns and feller-citizens: I want to know if it's accordin' to the dignity of an American citizen to not go into this here show? [Cries of "No! no!"] Then foller me!" And brandishing his stick in the air, he marched to the entrance, which the showman immediately threw aside, and in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable, said:

"Walk in, gentlemen! walk right in!"

Trat-de-tat, trat-de-tat, trat-de-tat, trat-tat-tat! and the platoon marched in, with colors flying and band playing.

Once inside, Thomas Thomson left the ranks, and diligently inspected the curiosities. He had the snakes stirred up by the keeper of the den, and he made the thin man walk before him in review. He pinched the fat woman's arms, and wondered if it was real flesh. He conversed with her, and spoke feelingly of a young lady whose image he declared she resembled. He wished her joy, and, notwithstanding the incoherence of his remarks, would probably have made love to the lady had it not suddenly occurred to him that he was alone,—that his friends had left him. He left the fat lady quickly and unceremoniously, and proceeded to the ferry, arriving just in time to see the boat containing his companions rounding out of the slip. There was nothing to do but wait for the next boat, so he solaced himself at a neighboring tavern, and when the next boat left for Philadelphia, it had for a part of its precious freight a drunken man, and his name was Thomas Thomson.

From the time that Mr. Thomson took the boat at Gloucester until he awoke some time in the night, very thirsty, in the police station, all was blank and confused, and as he sat and listened to the drunken ravings of those around him, he accused himself of being a fool instead of a gentleman, and vowed that he'd do so never again.

CHAPTER V.

DILATES ON THE BEAUTIES OF MODERN IMPROVEMENTS, INTRODUCES A NEW CHARACTER, AND RESTORES TWO UNFORTUNATES TO THEIR FRIENDS.

Gascon Nidd and Mr. Wontus strolled leisurely along the river until reaching Market Street, then turned up to Third.

"How very happy these people should be!" said Mr. Wontus, looking about him.

"Why?" questioned Mr. Nidd.

"Look at their delightful railroads; see, every street is traversed with them. I suppose these companies pay the people very handsomely for the use of their streets?"

"Guess not."

"Guess not? Why, Nidd, certainly when citizens give up their highways—the streets which they have paid for—to corporations, they ought to be well paid for it."

"Mr. Wontus," said Nidd, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "you are a very innocent man."

Mr. Wontus looked amazed.

"Don't you know," said Nidd, continuing, "that all cities are governed the same as New York,—except not quite so bad,—and that the corporations are all politicians, and that politicians are all corporations; they own everything."

Mr. Wontus looked incredulous.

"Yes, sir, we have the reputation of being a free people here, but I tell you there is no people in the world so shamefully treated, and more tyrannized over than we are. We vote for whom we please, but what difference does that make? The whole affair has been arranged beforehand by one party

or the other, and whichever side wins, the men who pay the taxes are the only ones to suffer, and so the world has always been, and I presume ever will be."

Mr. Nidd having delivered himself of this rather extraordinary homily, took his hand from Mr. Wontus's shoulder, and that gentleman said, "Shameful!" and they continued their walk.

Soldiers incipient, and soldiers mature, were prevalent everywhere, and Mr. Wontus spoke of them as noble fellows, and hoped they would all live to come back and enjoy the fruits of their labor and hardship. Sight-seeing was postponed until a more favorable time, for Mr. Wontus confessed that his little affair with the ruddy-faced, corpulent lady in the cars had somewhat unmanned him, and he desired rest. It was near tea-time, however, when Mr. Nidd walked into the hotel, with Mr. Wontus close behind him, and inquired for Thomas Thomson.

"Out?" said Mr. Nidd.

"Out?" echoed Mr. Wontus. "Pray how long has he been out, sir?"

The clerk consulted the clock carefully, as all hotel clerks do under similar circumstances. "At least three hours."

"Zounds!" cried Mr. Wontus, in astonishment, "then our baggage is gone."

The clerk assured him that it was safe in the baggage-room. Mr. Wontus's face assumed a more placid expression.

"And Wilkins,—Mr. Wilkins?" said Mr. Nidd, inquiringly.

"Not returned yet."

"Uh!" grunted Mr. Wontus.

"Hasn't found a satisfactory place yet," said Mr. Nidd, turning to Mr. Wontus. "Careful man,—highly recommended by——"

"But Tommy!" interrupted Mr. Wontus; "he'll be lost."

"Streets very plain and straight," suggested the clerk, smiling blandly. "Will the gents have tea?"

"Of course," said Mr. Wontus.

"Certainly," said Mr. Nidd. And the gentlemen walked into the dining-room, and were discussing the probabilities of the whereabouts of Messrs. Wilkins and Thomson.

"Are you sure your man Wilkins is the right sort of a man?" asked Mr. Wontus, as he sipped his tea.

"He's not my man," cried Mr. Nidd, wiping his mouth.

"Why, yes he is," insisted Mr. Wontus.

"Certainly he isn't!"

"You hired him."

"I secured him for *you*. He's the kind of man you wanted. You recollect his story of himself?"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Wontus, reflectively; "but you, Mr. Nidd, ought to have known——"

"The gentleman waits outside," said a servant, handing Mr. Wontus a card.

Wontus took the card, and adjusting his glasses, read:

"Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson—*Scribendi*."

Mr. Wontus looked at the card a long while in silence. "I don't know him,—at least I don't recollect him," said he, and he handed the card to Mr. Nidd.

"Scribendi?" said Mr. Nidd, thoughtfully. "Don't know him!" And handing the card back, he went on with his eating.

"Fine name," said Mr. Wontus, again reading the card thoughtfully. "Old family I expect; I've often heard of these old Philadelphia families,—great place for blood. My compliments to the gentleman," said he, aloud, "ask him to be kind enough to wait a few moments." Mr. Wontus deposited the card in his vest-pocket, and casting a look about him which seemed to say, "I did that very well," he sipped his tea in silence.

Tea concluded, Mr. Wontus ran his fingers through his hair, pulled down his waistcoat, and left the room followed by Mr. Nidd. On entering the office an inquiring glance was cast at the clerk, who in turn cast an inquiring glance at the clock and said: "Not yet, sir!" the supposition being that Mr. Wontus had inquired concerning the looked-for arrival of Tommy and Mr. Wilkins.

Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson was a gentleman of medium height, light complexion, and light chestnut hair, which he brushed very slick over his forehead. His features were well cut, and his form sinewy and compact. He had a grayish-blue eye, which appeared to be perfectly under its owner's control and which spoke defiance, anger, or sorrow at his bidding. A large and luxuriant moustache graced his upper lip, and lent a rather *distingué* appearance to his mouth. His manner was easy, though at times a little forced and con-

strained; and having cultivated a supreme love for association with the best society, he not only believed it necessary, but wherever opportunity offered made use of the most glowing language, which he delivered in a studied, impressive style. Such a person stepped up to Mr. Wontus as he entered the gentlemen's sitting-room, and remarked:

"Mr. Wontus, if I am not mistaken, sir?"

"At your service, sir," said Mr. Wontus, bowing. "Mr. Higginson, I presume, sir?"

"Your obedient servant." And Mr. Higginson bowed very low.

"Mr. Nidd, sir, one of our party. Mr. Nidd, Mr. Higginson."

"Delighted to meet you, sir," said Mr. Higginson, bowing very low again; "of New York, I presume" (turning to Mr. Wontus). "What a strong likeness to Sherman, who I predict is destined to be one of our great leaders! Mr. Nidd, pardon me, sir, but your name is familiar; let me see. Yes, I am sure I've heard your name; perhaps some member of your family—but excuse me, gentlemen; I had almost forgotten. It was by the merest accident in the world that I learned of your distinguished presence in the city. Was here to meet a friend from your delightful city. Heard from a gentleman who was on the train that you were here. Always too happy to be of service to strangers visiting our city. Consider me at your service. You propose staying with us awhile, I hope. Much to see of interest, I assure you."

Mr. Wontus turned to Nidd and whispered: "Some mistake."

"Evidently," whispered Nidd.

"Not at all, gentlemen," cried the voluble Higginson, who had overheard the remarks. "Not at all, gentlemen. Your secret is safe with me (and he winked knowingly). I can well understand your desire to be *incog.* Momentous time! very, indeed. Men intrusted with important governmental business cannot be too careful." (Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd exchanged glances.) "Only men of sterling integrity and great qualifications would be chosen, I know. One moment, gentlemen." And Mr. Higginson dashed out of the room to return in a moment and inform Mr. Wontus that the train had come in, and it would be necessary for him to tear himself away. Would

they pardon his intrusion? They would. Would they call upon him and take a glass of old wine before they left town? They would. Would they pardon him for calling on them again to-morrow? They would be pleased to see him. He shook them by the hand heartily, and was gone like a flash.

"Strange," said Nidd.

"*Very* strange," said Mr. Wontus.

"For whom, and what in the devil does he take us? Perhaps Wilkins has been talking."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Wontus. And both gentlemen settled back in their chairs and into silence at the same time.

The hour of ten at length tolled from the old State-House bell, and lingered on the quiet air. "Eight, nine, ten; yes, ten o'clock," said Wontus, counting the strokes and consulting his watch.

"Poor boys! perhaps they have found a watery grave."

"No danger," growled Nidd, without looking up.

"Perhaps they have ventured on the river," said Wontus, reflectively.

"People who are born to be hung will never be drowned," growled Mr. Nidd, rising. "I'm going to bed," and without further ado he marched out and asked to be shown to his room.

Mr. Wontus sat in a thoughtful mood for a long while, but the dreamy god claimed him for his own, and he concluded to go to bed, although sorely worried at the protracted absence of his people.

The following morning the two gentlemen were up by times, and were smoking their after-breakfast cigars, when Mr. Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson again presented himself.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Wontus, "have you seen Thomas or Wilkins?—pardon me, Mr. Higginson, but these men have worried me so that I forgot that you were not acquainted with them."

"I will, freely,—don't mention it, sir. I know what it is to be looking for people with whom one has urgent business,—it impresses itself on one's mind so terribly. Just the other day I had an engagement of importance with the Hon. Mr. Highstrung,—you know him? Splendid, genial, high-toned soul, I assure you; and do you know that I was so worried by the pressure on my brain that I really asked General McDabb—he of the lion-heart—if he had seen him, when really the general

doesn't know him at all. Ha! ha! it was really laughable. Do you know the general? As brave a man and as gallant a soldier as ever drew a sword. He dined with me yesterday, in company with the Hon. Judge Nabem,—the judge is a distant relation of mine, and a capital fellow at table, I assure you."

Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd both said that they had no acquaintance with the gentleman.

"I'm sure you would be perfectly delighted with the general,—destined to command the army, and occupy a high place in the councils of the nation; and he deserves it."

"Scribendi!" said Mr. Nidd.

Mr. Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson looked at Mr. Nidd, when that gentleman apologetically asked him why he placed that word on his card.

"Oh, yes, gentlemen; I ought to have explained before. Well, you see, while I am not exactly a paid contributor to any of our daily newspapers, yet, you see, as the adage has it, 'knowledge is power,' and I occasionally contribute matter a trifle deeper and more varied than the editors are accustomed to handle, and my intercourse with the most prominent men of the country gives me an opportunity to speak by the card about the events of the day. Besides this," continued Mr. Higginson, after a brief pause, "these newspaper fellows are generally a clever set of fellows,—that is, in their places,—and I occasionally assist them when I feel that they are unable to assist themselves; hence I placed the word on the card which I sent into you yesterday."

Mr. Nidd drew a long breath and walked to the clerk's desk. That gentleman looked up at the clock, and said: "Not yet, sir." And Mr. Nidd walked back again and said to Mr. Wontus: "Not yet."

"Very strange," said Mr. Wontus.

"Did you notice the little address I made last evening?" asked Mr. Higginson.

Mr. Wontus answered in the negative,—he had not had the pleasure.

"In these times one must do all he can to give the government the support which it needs. It's rather a pleasing position for me, although I cannot agree with the Hon. Secretary of War that the Virginia campaign should be conducted on the basis he proposes. You see—but then I presume you know

quite as much as I do. Indeed, gentlemen, I would be glad to have you take a glass of wine with me to-day. But my address last evening (producing a paper from his coat-tail pocket) I had almost forgotten. I really feel ashamed, the reporter has so very highly praised me; but then, you know, there is no way of stopping them if they take a fancy to you." And Mr. Higginson laid the paper on the table and turned away. Of course Mr. Wontus looked at the paper. Mr. Higginson knew he would when he laid it down. After a brief perusal, Mr. Wontus pronounced the whole affair as capital.

[NOTE.—Be it known that Mr. Higginson had written the speech and the flattering preface himself, and worried one of the reporters with numerous invitations to dine and wine with him, until he secured it a place in the columns of the *Morning Flash.*]

"I hope you may be successful," said Mr. Higginson, turning to Mr. Nidd.

"I hope so," replied Mr. Nidd.

"But is it so very secret?"

"Pretty secret."

"Perhaps I'm mistaken, but I have understood——"

"What have you understood?" cried Mr. Nidd, interrupting.

"That you were secret officers of the government on important business connected with the Treasury."

Mr. Nidd laughed heartily as he repeated the conversation to Mr. Wontus, who had been deeply interested in the paper, and Mr. Higginson looked astonished and angry.

"Why, dash it, old fellow," cried Mr. Nidd, "it is all a mistake. My friend here is a retired soap-boiler, and I am a poor conveyancer; we are traveling for our own pleasure, and at our own expense."

Mr. Higginson's manner changed at once.

"Then you are not officers of the government?"

"No."

"Nor on secret business?"

"No."

"Soap-boiler and conveyancer," said Mr. Higginson, sneeringly.

"Yes." And Mr. Nidd and Mr. Wontus both laughed most heartily.

"Good-morning!" cried Higginson, rising.

"Don't hurry," said Nidd, but Mr. Higginson was gone.

"That man is not to be trusted," said Mr. Nidd, seriously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Wontus. "Soap-boiler did the business for him."

Further remark on the part of the gentlemen was cut short by a gentleman asking if *Colonel* Wontus was in.

"Been promoted," said Nidd, laconically.

A tall, military-looking gentleman stepped up to Mr. Wontus and inquired if he was Colonel Wontus. The gentleman answered that his name was Wontus, but he had never had the pleasure of being an army officer, much less a colonel.

"Ah, yes, I see," said the major. "Your friend here, perhaps he——"

"No, nor he either."

"Rather surprising in these days, gentlemen,—but no matter,—I am Major Flick, of the secret service, your most obedient servant." And the major bowed and looked really humble.

"Secret service," said Mr. Nidd, aside; "dash the secret service! Scribendi next, I presume."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Wontus, dignity and severity beaming from every lineament of his pastoral countenance, "what is your business?" And he eyed the major from head to foot, and then from foot to head.

"A word in your private ear," said the major, confidently, in no wise abashed by the stern manner of Mr. Wontus, and casting a meaning glance at Nidd.

"No secrets from *that* gentleman," said Mr. Wontus, decisively. "Pray go on, sir."

"You have a gentleman—a most excellent gentleman—by the name of Wilkins in your party?"

Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd exchanced glances.

"We had!" replied Mr. Wontus.

"He isn't here now?"

A nod.

"You don't know where he is?"

"In heaven, we hope!" interposed Mr. Nidd.

"In prison," said the major.

"Nidd, I have feared from the first that that man of yours would get us into trouble," said Mr. Wontus, addressing himself to his friend.

"He's not *my* man, sir!" said Mr. Nidd, sharply; "you wanted him, and I procured him."

"Not *his* fault by any means," cried the major, spiritedly; "looking for quarters—stopped to take a snifter with a friend—was brutally assaulted—knocked down by dastard ruffians—did all I could for him—was nearly killed myself—perfectly false charges against the gentleman—dragged him to station-house—been to see him this morning—great shame—matter should be investigated——"

"And shall!" cried Mr. Wontus.

Mr. Nidd looked incredulous, but said nothing.

"Where is he—where are his accusers?" asked Mr. Wontus, whose heart has been touched by the recital of the bad treatment of Wilkins.

"I shall be pleased to accompany you to the place," said the major, rising. "It has only been a short time since I left there. I called to see the unfortunate gentleman early this morning,—wanted to do something for him. He sent me to you."

"Very properly," said Mr. Wontus, rising. "Come, Nidd!" turning to the major: "Will you take a little something, Mr. —major, before going!"

"No—ah, no!" sighed the major, his looks belying his words.

"Couldn't you be persuaded?" said Mr. Nidd.

The gentleman was persuaded, and the party left under convoy of Major Flick, who, Mr. Wontus remarked, was very entertaining, and soon reached the police office.

Mr. Wilkins had already had a hearing, but as no charges were brought against him, except by the officer who arrested him, a fine was imposed, and, Mr. Wilkins being unable to pay the fine and charges, was returned to his cell to await transportation to the county prison. Of course Mr. Wilkins protested against the whole proceeding as being unjust, if not unlawful; but he was directed to shut up, which he did like a philosopher, knowing that might made right, whether law or justice guaranteed it or not.

The sight of Mr. Wontus's well-filled wallet soon gained an interview with Mr. Wilkins, who was found with a damaged countenance, and after the fines and charges had been settled he was liberated; and then followed a rehearsal of the

whole affair by Mr. Wilkins, done up in that gentleman's own inimitable and glowing style. Mr. Wontus listened with wonder, and Mr. Nidd took the liberty of questioning some portions of the story; but Mr. Wilkins appealed to the major, and that gentleman not only verified every word of it, but added his own testimony to the bravery of Mr. Wilkins, and how they (he and Mr. Wilkins) were only overcome after all by the great paucity of numbers.

"Did you notice *me?*" cried the major, as the party entered the hotel. "Ah, I stood by you truly, but it was of no use; there was nothing that saved me but—it's all right now. Didn't I call to see you and offer you my services the first thing this morning? Of course I did, and I would have had you liberated without troubling your friends but for my accidentally forgetting my pocket-book." Mr. Wilkins nodded assent continually, and Mr. Wontus said: "Generous fellow!" and then went to the clerk, who looked at the clock and said: "Not yet!"

"Where *can* Tommy be?" remarked Mr. Wontus.

"Have you seen him?" asked Mr. Nidd of Mr. Wilkins.

That gentleman looked as much surprised as a man with a pair of black eyes can look, and said he had not.

"Search must be at once made; inquiries must be instituted; the authorities must be notified. Thomas *must* be found if alive. Poor fellow!" and Mr. Wontus's face wore a sorrowful expression, "perhaps he has been drowned. I am sure he would never have left the house except under the most extraordinary circumstances."

"General," cried the clerk, speaking to Mr. Nidd (it was a fashion of the time that every stranger should be hailed by a military title), "your man is in 'moco'; there is an officer here who has just been sent here to inform you of the fact."

"Moco?" said Mr. Nidd, with a puzzled air. "Pray, sir, where is 'moco'?"

"Prison!" laughed the clerk.

"Oh!" said Mr. Nidd, and he called Mr. Wontus aside to impart the information that Thomas Thomson was in prison, otherwise called "moco."

Mr. Wontus was astonished; he could not believe it; but there was the officer, who reiterated the statement of the clerk, and Mr. Wontus was forced to believe it, much against his will.

"Nidd, I'll go home; yes, I'll go home. One day out, and enough trouble to ruin a stronger man than I am. I can't bear it, Nidd! Tommy is close to me; he's been with me since a boy, and I feel the disgrace as much as if he was my son." Mr. Wontus spoke in accents of the deepest distress. "Nidd, Nidd, what am I to do? You are a strong, wise, cool man,—your advice! What course had I better pursue?"

Mr. Nidd, thus appealed to, coughed two or three times, rubbed his chin with the palm of his hand, and in a soothing voice bid Mr. Wontus take courage. "It will all come right, I've no doubt," he continued. "Had you been a married man, Mr. Wontus, you would have been used to these little vexations; perhaps some villains have treated Thomas as Mr. Wilkins was treated."

"I will get married—— No, I won't!" cried Mr. Wontus, the language of his friend still lingering in his mind. "Perhaps," he said, after a moment's pause,—"perhaps Tommy has been unfortunate; I must not be hasty. Damn it, I will stand it!—I'll stand anything! Go home? No, never!" And his face at once assumed a determined, cheerful expression.

"Where is this place?" asked Wontus, turning to the officer, "this Morocco, or whatever you call it?"

The officer said that it was but a short distance off, and, directing Mr. Wilkins to remain until his return, he and Mr. Nidd and the officer started for the police station.

Thomas Thomson was found, as usual in such cases, and was liberated in the customary manner, much to his own pleasure and Mr. Wontus's relief. On returning to the hotel his story was related, and after everything had been fully explained, Mr. Nidd suggested that as quarters had not yet been found, that Mr. Wontus and himself should go out and seek lodgings, and that under no circumstances should Mr. Thomson and Mr. Wilkins leave the hotel until their return. The major stood by and looked as though he might be "persuaded," but as he was simply the friend of Mr. Wilkins, and as Mr. Wilkins was out of spirits, the major soon left, promising to call again; and our hero and his friend sallied forth in search of a more desirable location.

CHAPTER VI.

TELLS OF A SLIGHT ERROR CONCERNING MR. THOMSON, AND THE VALOR OF MR. WONTUS. IT ALSO DEVELOPS A NEW PHASE IN GASCON NIDD'S CHARACTER, AND INTRODUCES A WOMAN.

THE practical business tact of Mr. Nidd, although as a general thing of little use to the party, was of great service to them on this occasion. He informed Mr. Wontus at the outset that he would attend to the matter, and he commenced by deliberately stopping and buttonholing every genteel man who came along, and asking him where he could find a suitable lodging-house. His rather grave and dignified appearance spoke well for him in most cases, but it was not until he had inquired of some half-dozen or so, with various results, that he was successful in finding the man who had confidence and cleverness enough to direct him to such a place as he thought would suit the inquirer and his party.

The house—a very nice-looking one, on Walnut Street—was reached, and, upon stating their business, Mrs. Squirm was called, and introduced as the landlady. Her manner was mild and suave; but, as Mr. Wontus afterward said to Mr. Nidd, privately, her looks were rather against accepting her at her own estimate. That made but little difference, Mr. Nidd said; and after Mr. Wontus had expressed himself as pleased with the rooms, the question of rental was settled, and the gentlemen left, promising to return with their baggage in course of the afternoon.

"I think it is a good place," said Mr. Wontus, "for the little time we shall remain here."

Mr. Nidd acquiesced, and they journeyed to the hotel, where, somewhat to their surprise, they found both Mr. Thomson and Mr. Wilkins awaiting them, and without any accident having happened to either during their absence.

The clerk was notified of their intention to leave, and after that gentleman had gone through the regular process of con-

sulting the clock, the bill was made out, paid. and a wagon loaded with the baggage, and Tommy and Wilkins placed on the top as a guard, Mr. Wontus and his friend intending to direct the movement of the whole from the sidewalk. All being in readiness, the "percession," as Mr. Wilkins called it, moved from the hotel, and thence up Walnut Street.

"No accident to-day," said Mr. Nidd, as they walked along, looking at the surging mass of citizens and soldiers who crowded the sidewalks.

"None," said Mr. Wontus, and his face looked as calm and placid as a mirror. The wagon was just crossing Third Street, and Mr. Wontus had just taken his eyes off that magnificent pile of stones called the Exchange, when a man on the sidewalk opposite cast a hurried but penetrating glance at Tommy, and in a twinkling climbed up into the wagon, and, without ceremony, laid his hand on Mr. Thomson's shoulder, and said:

"My prisoner!"

Mr. Thomson looked at the man with terror and astonishment.

"Come, get out!" cried the man, hurriedly; "I've been looking for you these two weeks."

"What for? I don't want to," cried Mr. Thomson, in piteous accents, trying to lay his hand on Mr. Wilkins's shoulder, who was sitting in front with the driver, engaged in an absorbing and animated conversation.

"Come, get!" cried the man, pulling Tommy by the shoulder; "you belong to the Seventy-second, and you're wanted."

The proceeding had been watched by Mr. Wontus. "Nidd! Wilkins! driver! anybody!" cried he, rushing into the street, in a terrible condition of excitement, much to the great amusement of some and the astonishment of others,

"Will nobody stop this infernal wagon?" he shouted, trying to put his very short legs into the very tall wagon. "Ho! there, ho! there," he continued, reluctantly giving up his efforts to get into the wagon. "What in the devil do you mean, sir? Get out of that wagon, and leave that man alone, or I'll have you arrested. I'll brain you with a stone." And he commenced trying to pull one of the paving-stones from its bed.

"He's a deserter, I tell you," cried the man to the driver,

who had been attracted by the cries of Tommy and Mr. Wontus, and handed Mr. Wilkins the reins.

"If that's it, why, take him," said the patriotic driver. And taking the reins again, he pulled in alongside the curb, and with Wilkins calmly looked on at the man trying to get Thomas out of the wagon and Thomas trying to keep himself in.

"What's the matter?" coolly inquired Mr. Nidd, who had just noticed Mr. Wontus's efforts to unloosen the paving-stone, but who as yet was ignorant of the trouble in the wagon.

"Matter?" cried Mr. Wontus, with redoubled exertions, "look there!" And he pointed, with an excited gesture, to the struggle going on in the wagon. Mr. Nidd was at a loss to comprehend for a moment. The usually innocent and placid Mr. Wontus in such a position and in such a passion was new to him. But he saw that something unusual had occurred, and, with gigantic strides, he crossed the street, stepped up to the wagon, and demanded to know the reason for such strange proceedings. Thomas was very red in the face, and so was the man, for neither appeared to have much the advantage of the other in strength, and both appeared to be satisfied to quit their struggles to answer Mr. Nidd's question. At this juncture Mr. Wontus came up, and would probably have made somebody feel the weight of a huge stone which he held in his hand, had it not been for the fact that the stranger, catching sight of his threatening countenance and menacing attitude, leaped from the wagon and ran up a neighboring street, amid the shouts of the crowd who had been attracted to the scene by the rather unusual proceedings.

"Bully for the old duck!" shouted one; "Hunkey boy!" shouted another; and then the crowd sent up such a yell that Mr. Wontus was brought to a true understanding of the rather ludicrous figure he was cutting, in a very sudden manner.

"Drive on!" cried Mr. Nidd, in a commanding manner, as the man disappeared around the corner, and Mr. Wontus cast his boulder into the street. "Drive on!" And leaving an explanation of the affair to follow in course of time, the party journeyed on without further mishap until the mansion of Mrs. Squirm was reached and the corps safely installed in its new quarters. Thomas was able to impart scarcely more than the reader is already familiar with, and the conclusion arrived at by all was, that the strange man was either a detective or

a recruiting agent, and had selected Thomas as his own, and would probably have succeeded in making him a soldier but for the courageous interference of Mr. Wontus. Mr. Wilkins was loud in the praise of Mr. Wontus, but desired it to be fully and perfectly understood that he had stood inactive merely to secure the man himself and then turn him over to the authorities, which he was sure he would have done had it not been for the interference of Mr. Wontus, and so the matter stood.

The new quarters were comfortable, and after tea the gentlemen came up refreshed and lively. Mr. Thomson particularly so. Experience had taught him wisdom, for, besides being confined in the narrow, filthy, sickly limits of a police station cell, he had been so unfortunate as to find that all of his money had mysteriously disappeared, at a time when he had undertaken to play the part of a gentleman. Besides that, had he not escaped from the hands of a ruffian, who would have dragged him away if he could? To be sure he had, and he felt like rejoicing.

As for Mr. Wilkins, his equilibrium did not appear to have been disturbed in the least; his almost impenetrable countenance was ornamented by a pair of swollen black eyes, which were less penetrable and expressive than usual. His disposition was not of that kind that can be called excessively sensitive; he was not easily cast down, and was hard to keep down when he did go down at all; and as he sat on the top of Mr. Wontus's trunk, with his legs stretched out before him, no serener or happier-looking man (with exception of the eyes) could possibly be found. The misfortunes of the day before were evidently not calculated to make much of an impression upon a nature such as his; in fact, as a "man of the world," he looked on these little events as but passing ripples upon the placid bosom of life's river. He often quoted from his miscellaneous lore, "let the dead past bury the dead," and endeavored to live up to that doctrine by burying disagreeable things the moment they were numbered among the past.

Mr. Nidd had listened to Mr. Thomson's story, had formed his own opinion of everything connected with the affair, and without deigning to give vent to his opinion, took his place at the window and was soon engaged with his evening newspaper. Mr. Wontus appeared to think that there were traces of the late accidents lingering in the minds of the company,

and no sooner did that thought take possession of him than he resolved to dispel it and accordingly proposed a game of euchre. After a little persuasion Mr. Nidd consented, and Mr. Wilkins was directed to procure a pack of cards, which he quickly did from one of the boxes, much to the surprise of Mr. Wontus, who, while he liked the game, could not bear the idea of his dying suddenly and having a pack of cards found among his effects. The game was started, and progressed for some time in silence, but Mr. Nidd being constantly the winner, Mr. Wontus declared that it was becoming monotonous and proposed to make it a four-hander, taking in Messrs. Wilkins and Thomson. Nidd assented, with a chuckle of ill-disguised pleasure, and they threw around for partners. Whether by accident or design cannot be said, but despite Mr. Wontus's best wishes to the contrary, it occurred that Nidd and Wilkins held the two highest cards, and hence were partners against Wontus and Thomson.

Of course it would be understood, as the game progressed, that Mr. Thomson was not much of a player, but still I venture to verify the matter in advance, and avouch, on my own account, that he hardly knew a knave from a king. The game went on, and notwithstanding the want of science on Mr. Thomson's part, and the want of that important adjunct, "luck," on Mr. Wontus's part, he won a majority of the games at the end of the first hour.

During the time it was noticeable that while Mr. Nidd did not appear to take much interest in the game, yet there seemed to be a perfect system of telegraphing between him and his partner. Mr. Wontus was in high glee, and once or twice, when Mr. Nidd suggested that it was growing late, Mr. Wontus twitted him with the remark, that he guessed if he couldn't play any better than he (Nidd) did, that he'd want to go to bed too.

"But it's so dry," said Nidd.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Wontus, "that's your game, is it? Very well. Now, Thomas, we will show them something; we'll make it interesting; the loser to pay for the wine, the winner to go for it. Is it agreed?"

Mr. Wilkins said he was, perfectly. Mr. Nidd said nothing, but in a knowing way commenced to shuffle the cards.

"Best two in three," said Mr. Wontus.

"Best two in three," said Mr. Nidd, and the game progressed. The telegraphing between Mr. Nidd and Wilkins continued, and at the close of the first rubber Mr. Wontus lost by just one point.

"Very close," said he, turning down his counters. "If I had played my ace on that second trick," he continued, "I would have euchred you."

"Unquestionably," remarked Mr. Wilkins, with great politeness.

The next rubber Mr. Wontus won without trouble; but now came what Mr. Wilkins declared was the "sugar," and the coterie was individually and collectively interested.

"Now, Tommy, you must exercise care," said Mr. Wontus, advising his partner; "our reputation is at stake," and Mr. Wontus played the knave of hearts; Wilkins followed with a side-card. "Now, Tommy," said Mr. Wontus, "your play; be careful!"

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Thomson, fingering his cards and looking at them intently. "What's trump?"

"Hearts!" cried Mr. Wontus, excitedly.

"Then the jack of diamonds is the next best card to the jack of hearts, ain't it?"

"Certainly. Now——"

Mr. Thomson played the knave of diamonds.

"Thunderation!" cried Mr. Wontus, excitedly, jumping up from his chair and endeavoring to look into his partner's hand.

"No instructions!" cried Mr. Nidd, interposing, and forcing Mr. Wontus into his chair. "No instructions!"

"Have you no other heart?" almost shouted Mr. Wontus.

Tommy looked at his hand, then at his partner, then at his hand again, but said nothing. He looked bewildered.

"No instructions!" cried Mr. Nidd again, and he played a small card and pushed the trick over to Mr. Wontus.

He led again; this time a spade. Mr. Wilkins trumped it. Thomas played a spade; so did Nidd, and the trick was won, much to the chagrin of Mr. Wontus, who cast fierce glances at his partner. Mr. Wilkins led the ace of hearts; Tommy played the ten, Nidd played the queen; and Mr. Wontus the king.

"Any more, gentlemen?" said Mr. Wilkins, as he played out the nine.

"A euchre, by thunder!" shouted Mr. Wontus; "and with enough cards in our hands to have made a march. Thomas, you are a stupid ass."

The gentlemen all laughed at Mr. Wontus's outburst of passion, and the game went on. But our hero had lost all interest in the game, and let it go by default.

"You've lost," said Mr. Nidd, deprecatingly, laying his hand on Mr. Wontus's arm.

"Mr. Nidd," said Wontus, calmly, but severely, "*I* did not lose; it was that infernal jackass sitting there!" And with this he jumped up from his chair, and, mashing his hat on his head, walked with hearty strides to the door, which he flung open as though he was going out. Suddenly he halted.

"Nidd," he cried, in a subdued voice, "come here."

Mr. Nidd advanced to the door and looked in the direction indicated by Mr. Wontus's finger. "Scribendi!" he whispered. And, in truth, there stood Mr. Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson, with his arm encircling the waist of Mrs. Squirm, the landlady.

"What's to be done?" asked Mr. Wontus, partially closing the door, his face losing its vexed expression.

"What's to be done?" echoed Mr. Nidd. "Why, what *is* to be done?"

"It's so amusing," whispered Mr. Wontus, mysteriously; and he shrugged his shoulders and gave vent to a subdued laugh. "Let us have another peep at them."

The door was opened cautiously, but Mr. Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson, who had been standing in the room just across the first landing on the stairs, and not more than a dozen yards off, had mysteriously disappeared, and the landlady was sitting in the centre of the room, completely absorbed in writing.

"Very singular," said Mr. Wontus, as he gazed through the partially-open door at her placid, innocent face; "very singular!"

"Rather good-looking," said Mr. Nidd.

"Pleasant, too," continued Mr. Wontus.

"All women are pleasant until you are married to them," replied Mr. Nidd.

"Nidd, I'm astonished."

"You'd be more astonished if you were married."

"But, Nidd," continued Mr. Wontus, without heeding his friend's last remark, "men are the same. I do not approve of this fashion men have of laying everything to women."

"The first great cause," said Nidd, decisively.

"I was never married," and Mr. Wontus's face assumed a rather regretful cast as he spoke, "but I am sure——"

"So am I *sure!*" interrupted Mr. Nidd. "That's the reason why I spoke. I loved my wife——"

"Ahem!" said a female voice just outside of the door.

Mr. Nidd darted on tip-toe to the front window and looked out. Mr. Wontus stood with his hand on the knob of the door, the picture of perplexity; he seemed to be rooted to the spot. A gentle knocking at the door did not relieve him in the least. He feared to move lest he should be heard, and he feared to speak lest his close proximity to the partially open door would indicate the fact that he had been peeping. Another gentle rapping. Mr. Wontus's face flushed and his knees trembled. Mr. Wontus felt that he had been guilty of something that was really disgraceful. Something must be done, and he commenced a series of pantomimic signs to Tommy and Wilkins, but these gentlemen were busily engaged in a lesson at seven-up, and failed to see the signs and postures which Mr. Wontus threw them to attract their attention. The knock was repeated; this time a trifle louder than before. The party looked up and gazed in mute astonishment at the contortions of Mr. Wontus's face and body. First he would wave his hand to command silence; then he would wriggle his body as though troubled with a pain; then he would point to the door with such a look of intense disgust that he presented a really painful picture.

Tommy no sooner saw the position and contortions of his master than he was upon his feet in a moment, upsetting his chair, and making considerable noise in his efforts to be quick, and was about to fly to the rescue, when he was checked by the warning hand and grievous face of Mr. Wontus.

"What's the matter?" cried Tommy, excitedly.

Mr. Wontus only waved his hand more vigorously and shook his head warningly.

"Sit down," whispered Mr. Wilkins, instantly comprehending the situation.

Mr. Thomson resumed his seat with wonderment depicted

in every lineament of his countenance, and Mr. Wontus looked somewhat relieved. All this had transpired in the brief space of a few seconds; but as Mr. Wilkins advanced to the door and placed himself between it and Mr. Wontus the latter gentleman's face was bathed in perspiration.

"Beg pardon, madam, did you knock?" said Mr. Wilkins, forcing Mr. Wontus into a corner and opening the door. He spoke in his blandest and sweetest accents.

Mr. Wontus looked relieved, and for the first time since the scene commenced drew a long breath.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said a sweet, mellow female voice, "but I heard you talking and I thought I would step over and see if you would like to have anything. I like my boarders to be waited on properly."

Mr. Wontus wiped the perspiration from his face and endeavored to peer through the chink of the door.

"Not at all, madam," said Mr. Wilkins, shading his already shaded eyes. "We were deeply interested in a philosophical question,—you are very kind,—no occasion to ask pardon,—only very happy not to be so situated as to trouble you."

"Good-evening, sir," and the voice and its owner, Mrs. Squirm, vanished down the stairs. Wilkins shut the door.

"Splendid! splendid!" shouted Mr. Wontus, capering about the room. "Wilkins, you *are* a man of the world; a perfect jewel. Who *could* have done the thing so well as you? Nobody. Nidd's a deserter. What a sweet voice she has! But there's that man Higginson; what's he doing here? No matter, she is an elegant woman,—a splendid woman; and what anxiety she manifests for our comfort! Nidd, I say, why did you desert? I am confounded glad you did; but why did you?"

"Mr. Wontus," said Mr. Nidd, turning from the window for the first time, "that is a fine woman,—an exception to the rule. No nonsense about *her;* all business,—common sense; the first woman of the kind I have ever seen. In some respects she reminds me of my deceased, dear wife. Fine round form, blue eyes, dark hair; and what shoulders! Grand woman. Mr. Wontus, if we remain here any length of time I shall take pains to cultivate her acquaintance. What was the matter with you? You did not show that courage that a man of your age should always display in the presence of the fair sex. I was amazed at you."

"*You!* you amazed at me!" cried Mr. Wontus, picking up the cards and throwing them down again with violence. "You amazed! Well, sir, it was *I* who ought to have been amazed! I stood by the door and would have entertained the lady most handsomely had she entered, but she did not. As it was, you deserted. Where is your gallantry, Mr. Nidd? Where is it?"

Mr. Nidd did not deign to reply to these remarks, or if he did, he did not have the opportunity, for Mr. Wilkins's mildest voice suggested that if the liquor which had been played for and won was not forthcoming pretty soon it would be too late. But the harmony of the occasion was disturbed, and Wontus suddenly became crabbed and disagreeable.

"Good-night, sir," said Mr. Nidd, and he walked into his room, adjoining Mr. Wontus's, and closed the door after him.

"A cheat," soliloquized Mr. Wontus, and then adding, aloud: "Go to bed, boys, go to bed; there has been enough excitement in the past few days to kill a man; we all want rest." And directing Mr. Thomson to turn off the gas, Mr. Wontus rolled himself into bed, and thought of the vexations and mishaps that had met him thus far at every step on his journey. After a time his thoughts assumed a more agreeable line, and he fell asleep with the mellow voice of Mrs. Squirm ringing in his ears and bright pictures of the future dancing before his eyes.

[It would be tedious for the reader to wade through the many pages of closely written matter which tell of the steps of the members of the club, from the time they became installed in Mrs. Squirm's house until they left the City of Brotherly Love, a week afterwards, therefore we have set one of our *savants* to work with a view to cull the choicest morsels, and present them, with a brief summary, to the reader.—PUB.]

Mr. Nidd could never tell why he had taken a dislike to Mr. Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson at the first, and now that they were both quartered beneath the same roof, and eating day after day at the same table, the feeling was not improved in the slightest. Mr. Higginson quietly ignored the members of the corps, and treated them as though they were perfect strangers. With Mr. Wontus this made no particular difference, because he was seldom in the house except to meals; but with Mr. Nidd the matter was quite different.

That gentleman appeared to take a particular delight in thrusting himself into Mr. Higginson's way whenever opportunity offered. If he met Mr. Higginson on the stairs, he stood in his way, and that gentleman quietly walked round him. If Mr. Higginson said to anybody in Mr. Nidd's presence that the weather was charming, that gentleman at once said to somebody else that it was miserable. If he said the news from the front was distressing, Mr. Nidd at once pronounced it delightful and most cheering. To all of which Mr. Higginson never ventured a reply or even a look. But what angered Mr. Nidd more than anything else was the assiduous attention bestowed upon the charming Mrs. Squirm. There were two reasons for this: first, because Mr. Nidd was naturally a jealous man, and second, because Mrs. Squirm was always attentive to him, when Mr. Higginson was not present, but appeared to lose interest in him when Mr. Higginson was there. As the days wore on the condition of affairs grew worse instead of better, and finally the matter came to a head, after a style that will be delineated farther on in these pages.

With Mr. Wontus everything was very pleasant. He awoke the morning after his game of euchre, feeling refreshed; and, while he dressed himself, thought over the affair with his friend the night before, and was willing to confess to himself that his anger had really a woman at the bottom of it, and that woman was Mrs. Squirm, his landlady. "Wine and women," said he, "are at the bottom of most things, but with the second I am forever done." And thus he philosophized, and quietly dismissed the matter from his head—after asking his friend's pardon.

From that time out his happiness was not clouded by a single mishap. He kept both Tommy and Mr. Wilkins by his side continually, and spent his days visiting the different places of interest about the city, and his nights either in his room or at the theatre. He visited the Volunteer Refreshment Saloons at the lower end of the city, where thousands of brave men were fed by the dainty hands of fair ladies every day, and watched with the keenest interest the sacrifices that were made by men and women, young and old, rich and poor, that the government and the flag which they loved so well might be preserved to them and posterity. He heard the heartfelt thanks and the hearty cheers that welled up from

the bosoms of the brave fellows who were thus so generously cared for, and his hands itched with the desire to aid with his personal services the patriotic men and women who toiled, without money, without price, for the dear old flag of our fathers. There was help in abundance, for each and every one seemed to vie with his neighbor as to who should contribute the most to the welfare of their soldier guests, and both day and night found willing hands to minister to the wants of all.

Girard College also came in for a share of his attention; and here a little incident occurred, which, though trifling in its character, deserves a place in the archives of the corps. It was a bright, cheerful morning when Mr. Wontus and his friends, armed with the necessary pass and dressed with more care than usual, presented themselves at the gate for admittance.

"Gentlemen of your cloth are not permitted to visit the institution," said the gate-keeper, looking at Mr. Wontus, "but these other gentlemen can go in if they desire." And he pointed to Wilkins and Thomson.

"Not go in?" said Mr. Wontus, regretfully.

"No, sir."

"These men can go in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why not me also?" asked Mr. Wontus, excitedly.

"You haven't read your card of admission carefully, have you?"

"No."

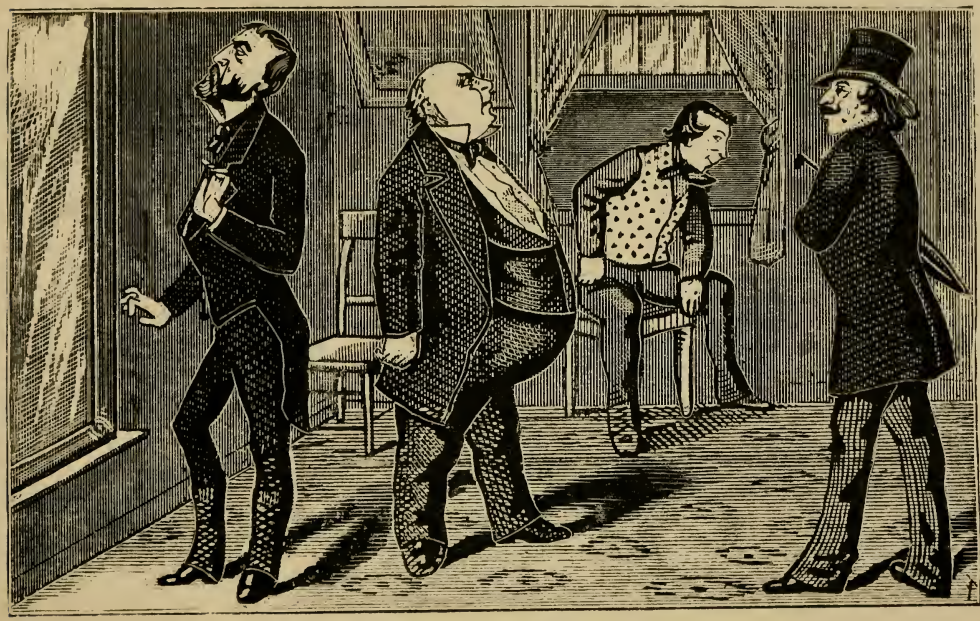
"You ought to do it."

"Why?" said Mr. Wontus. "I did not understand that any man was excluded from visiting this place, and I would like to know, sir, why I am singled out in this manner?"

"Well, sir," said the gate-keeper, with a smile, "men of your calling—ministers of the gospel—are not admitted. It is a part of the will of the gentleman who founded the college, and was intended, I presume, to keep the scholars from quarreling about the different modes of worshiping God."

"Thunderation!" cried Mr. Wontus, not exactly comprehending the matter. "I am not a minister. I was a soap manufacturer, but——"

"Soap manufacturers *are* admitted," interrupted the gate-keeper, laconically, and he ushered the party in.



PREPARING FOR THE BALL.

It was a long while before Mr. Wontus got the matter thoroughly fixed in his head; but during his wanderings through the spacious halls of the institution he finally accomplished that important feat, and informed Mr. Wilkins that he thought it was perfectly right, and that Mr. Girard must have been a man of great foresight and penetration to have ever thought of such a thing; for himself (Wontus), he would never have dreamed of it.

At the close of the club's first week with Mrs. Squirm the chasm existing between Mr. Nidd and Mr. Higginson had grown wider, deeper, and more threatening. The landlady, anxious to please both parties, had endeavored to keep herself out of the way of both; but, somehow or other, Mr. Nidd always managed to find her and spend an hour or so in her company, at such times regaling her with the admirable attributes of the former Mrs. Nidd, and hinting at the many similarities which existed between that lamented lady and Mrs. Squirm. These occasions generally occurred during the absence of Mr. Wontus, and, strange to say, were invariably interrupted by Mr. Higginson calling Mrs. Squirm away to look at some delicate flowers, or something of that sort, which he had just purchased.

At such times Mr. Nidd indulged in words not proper to mention here, and showered curses deep and long on the devoted head of the aforesaid Higginson. Finally affairs were brought to a climax one evening by Mr. Nidd calling his rival a snipe, a puppy, and various other choice names, ending the whole by giving Mrs. Squirm, in Higginson's presence, an account of "Scribendi's" visit to them at the hotel; the airs he put on, and the invitations he had given them to dine and wine with him. The lady expressed her astonishment, but begged the gentleman to forbear. Mr. Higginson in his loftiest manner undertook to explain the matter to the lady, but making sundry trifling errors in point of truth, Nidd grew more furious than ever, and ended the scene by pulling Mr. Higginson's nose, telling him he could have satisfaction if required, and dashing out into the street.

Mr. Wontus returned rather later than usual, and was much surprised to find Mr. Nidd absent. He proceeded directly to his room, and was therefore unacquainted with what the reader already knows. In blissful ignorance, he felt happy; the day

had been full of interest, and the news from the army was more cheering. McClellan had perfected all his arrangements; the troops were brigaded; the brigades were formed into corps, and everything betokened activity and an early movement.

Mr. Wontus was sitting ruminating over the news, when he was startled by the well-known voice of Mr. Nidd singing "Hail Columbia," in a minor key, and so high that his voice occasionally found it necessary to change into a falsetto of the most distressing shrillness. Had a bombshell fallen into the room Mr. Wontus could not have been more astounded, but there was little time for thought, before the tall form of Mr. Nidd came bounding into the room in the most unceremonious and uncalled-for manner imaginable.

"I'm drunk," said Mr. Nidd. His saying so was entirely superfluous, for anybody who had eyes could see that he was.

"Hush!" said Wontus, shutting the door and forcing Nidd into a chair. "Hush! you will alarm the house."

"Alar-alar-alarm the house? That's what I want to do!" And following this, Mr. Nidd indulged in a howl, something between the cry of a mastiff and a Sioux war-whoop.

"In Heaven's name, hush!" cried Mr. Wontus. "Tommy, Wilkins," he continued, "come here." But these gentlemen had retired or gone out.

"I'll li-hic him now!" cried Mr. Nidd, endeavoring to force himself out of the chair. "Yes, I'll li-hic him now—this very min't. Hig-Hig'son, where are you? Scribendi, come fo-forth."

Mr. Wontus endeavored to find out where his friend had been, and after considerable effort on Mr. Nidd's part, in which Higginson—gin—nose pulled—fight—Squirm—muss—pistols, etc., were prominently mixed up, that gentleman said enough to give Mr. Wontus to understand that there had been a difficulty, that was likely to end in something serious, and that his friend had been fortifying himself. This ascertained, he succeeded in getting him to bed, and at once made preparations for leaving the city.

The next morning Mr. Wontus consulted the party at an early hour. Mr. Nidd coming up "groggy," as the pugilists say, and informed them that the corps would leave on the eight o'clock train for Baltimore. Mr. Nidd demurred at first, but finally consented, and after breakfast the bill was paid, Mrs.

Squirm bid adieu by all but Mr. Nidd, and the corps was again on its way toward the seat of war.

As a simple matter of justice I am constrained to say that if Mr. Nidd remembered anything of the evening before, he never permitted a syllable of it to pass his lips; therefore, as is customary under like circumstances, we shall be charitable enough to believe that Mr. Nidd had entirely forgotten that he had pulled Edward Pason Montcalmb Higginson's nose and had promised satisfaction, with the saving clause, "if required." It is probably well enough for the reader to know that it was not required, and that Mr. Higginson only wished that he could remain at home and demand satisfaction; but most unfortunately, business called him to New York, on the six o'clock train, hence he was on his way two hours before his antagonist was awake, and thus what might have been a decided "affair of honor," was successfully checkmated by an affair of business.

CHAPTER VII.

QUARTERS THE CORPS IN BALTIMORE, AND DEVELOPS A NEW TALENT IN MR. WILKINS—IT ALSO TAKES THREE-QUARTERS OF THE PARTY TO A BALL, AND RELATES A LUDICROUS SCENE, AND OTHER THINGS TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION.

THE ride to Baltimore was unattended by any occurrence worthy of note, and had it not been that Mr. Wilkins had only checked the baggage to that place, it is probable that the Monumental City would have been left out of these records, or if mentioned at all, would have received but a passing notice. That Mr. Wilkins did a most lucky thing in doing this there can be no question, for while the corps was eager to proceed directly to Washington, Mr. Wontus has since expressed himself as being delighted at his having assumed extraordinary authority on the occasion, and insisted on spending a day or two with the Baltimoreans. He had heard of the disloyal element which was said to pervade the city so extensively, and as he had never seen any disloyal people outside of his native

city, he concluded that it would be time well spent for him to personally investigate the charge.

Rooms were secured at a hotel on Pratt Street by Mr. Wilkins, and after dinner Messrs. Wontus and Nidd sauntered through the city, leaving Wilkins and Thomson to arrange the baggage. The trunks once in the rooms, Mr. Wilkins suggested the propriety of his calling on some friends; and leaving Mr. Thomson to await the return of his employer, he took his departure, assuring Tommy that his absence would be of very brief duration.

That a man's life should be one constant round of exciting or vexing incidents seems at the first glance to be rather improbable, if not exactly impossible, and yet it is within the knowledge of almost every man who has a large circle of acquaintance that there are men in the world whose mode of living and thirst for the exciting and curious render their every-day life a perfect panorama of the most singular mishaps and exciting scenes. That these accidents should occur day after day without cessation, however, is a little singular, and the reader would be inclined to believe, if they followed in regular rotation, that the writer was allowing his imagination to play an important part in the detailing of events that came beneath his notice. Now this should not be, for in the days we write of no man who moved about, particularly in the vicinity of the large cities of the country, could fail to notice—if not too much absorbed in himself—that every day brought with it something interesting; either ludicrous, pleasant, or distressing. Thus far it has been the fortune of the members of the Wontus Corps of Observation to be the principal actors in strange comedies or ludicrous farces; nor is this at all singular when we consider how differently in many things each member was constituted, and how each, if we may except the usually skeptical Mr. Nidd, thirsted for entertainment and consequent adventure. "If all the trees of the forests were made into pens, and all the oceans were ink," there would scarcely be enough of either to indite the noticeable incidents that transpire beneath the notice of the most commonplace sight-seer in the course of a lifetime of threescore years and ten. But I digress.

As Mr. Wontus and his friend did nothing more than wander about and look at the monuments and forts during the first

two days of their stay, I shall leave that important fraction of the club and turn to our friend Mr. Wilkins. It is not exactly certain that that gentleman had ever been in Baltimore before, but he strode up Pratt Street to Light, and turned up that street with the air of a man who knows what he wants to do and means to do it. He had a happy faculty, and one which sits well on very few people, that of bestowing a continuous nod of recognition on gentlemen that he met on the street, and which was invariably returned, sometimes out of politeness and at others because the gentleman (Wilkins) had one of those peculiar faces which constantly remind us of some person who exists in the misty memories of the past.

I say this was a happy faculty, and so it was, for on more than one occasion Mr. Wilkins was greeted most warmly by men who had never seen him before in their lives, and to whom he instantly made himself a most agreeable acquaintance by his suavity and knowledge of the world,—not as the term is generally understood, but in a geographical sense. These occasions he never allowed to slip by, but at once proceeded to turn them to advantage in some way.

"Good-evening, doctor," cried a gentleman, rushing up to Mr. Wilkins as he turned into Baltimore Street.

"Ah, good-evening," returned Wilkins, and both shook hands most heartily.

"How have you been? I'm glad to see you looking so well—family all well, I hope. Terrible times these—much sickness in your locality?" And again Mr. Wilkins shook the gentleman's hand most vigorously.

"I fear I am mistaken," said the gentleman, after a close scrutiny of Mr. Wilkins's face and form. "Indeed, I must ask your pardon, sir; I thought you were my old friend, Doctor Nimrod."

It was now Mr. Wilkins's turn to be surprised, and he did it most beautifully. "And are you not my old friend, Senator ——?" He mentioned a certain prominent gentleman's name and then stepped back and threw his eyes over the gentleman's person. The gentleman answered that he was plain Mr. Jones, but looked as though his being mistaken for Senator—— was quite a compliment. Mr. Wilkins saw that he had him.

"Indeed, sir, it is I who should apologize," said Mr. Wilkins.

"Dash it! it's neither of us," returned the gentleman. "We have both been mistaken. Allow me to be so impertinent as to ask your name."

"Wilkins, sir; of the secret service."

"Ah! Glad to have met you, Mr. Wilkins; allow me, as a settlement of this difficulty, to insist on you joining me in a glass of wine."

Mr. Wilkins demurred.

Mr. Jones insisted, and finally persuaded Mr. Wilkins to walk around to Barnum's, where they cracked a bottle of wine and numerous jokes at the same time. "Wine works wonders," says an old play, and in this case it created a most genial friendship between the two gentlemen who had been brought together in such an unexpected and strange manner.

"Secret service, eh?" said Mr. Jones, sipping his wine.

"Yes,—a party of us; excellent gentlemen, I assure you." And Mr. Wilkins reclined back in his chair, and threw one leg over the other like a man who feels his importance.

"Going to remain any time in town?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Can't tell exactly; don't think we will remain more than a day or two longer. You see I am dressed for out-door service."

"I hope you will remain over Wednesday; splendid party on Wednesday evening; strangers attached to the service and known to the committee are invited; elegant time, I assure you; everything first class; would like to invite your party; all gentlemen?"

"Perfect gentlemen," said Mr. Wilkins; "and I've no doubt but that they'd be pleased to attend, if convenient."

"Have you a card?" asked Mr. Jones.

Mr. Wilkins went through the unnecessary trouble—for he knew he had none—of searching his pockets, and then said he had not. Mr. Jones took one of his own cards, and asked Mr. Wilkins his address. Having written it down, and ascertained how many there were in Mr. Wilkins's party, the gentleman excused himself for a moment and left the room. Wilkins was perfectly satisfied with everything thus far, and gave himself no concern as to the future. In a few moments Mr. Jones returned, and brought with him a piece of printed paper, inviting Major Benjamin Wilkins and friends to the Union Assembly, which would take place on Wednesday evening next ensuing.

"There," said the gentleman, placing the paper in Mr. Wilkins's hand; "now I hope you will be able to come; pretty girls, good music. You will enjoy yourselves, I know."

Mr. Wilkins thanked him most fluently, and Mr. Jones soon after remarking that he had an engagement, the gentlemen expressed the pleasure each had derived from meeting the other, and, with a promise to meet again on Wednesday, they parted.

It being near tea-time, Mr. Wilkins returned to the hotel, congratulating himself on his good fortune, and thinking of the surprise he had in store for the other members of the corps. Wontus and Nidd came in soon after, and all the members proceeded to the tea-table in excellent spirits.

During the meal Mr. Wilkins related, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, how he had met an old friend of his, whom he had not seen since he left him at Ems, in Germany, some two years before, and how his old friend Jonesey (he grew familiar) had insisted on inviting the whole party to attend the very fashionable and very select Union Assemblies that were then being held every two weeks in the city, and wound up his story by the production of the invitation. It is but proper to say that Mr. Nidd believed Mr. Wilkins to be relating what was not true when Mr. Wilkins spoke of "Jonesey," but the production of the invitation was more than he could bear quietly, and he ejaculated:

"The devil!" and was about to say more, but was stopped by Mr. Wontus declaring that he was in favor of remaining over Wednesday and participating in the affair.

And so it was settled that the corps should remain over Wednesday and attend the hop. Two things are here necessary to be understood: the first is, that to all outward appearances all the members of the party were on the same footing, except on occasions that were mutually understood; and second, that neither Wontus, Nidd, nor Thomson had ever danced a step in their lives. Had Mr. Wilkins? Certainly, he had waltzed with the Duchess of Sadowa, at Copenhagen, and "varsovienned" with the Princess Metternich at the Tuileries; but, then, his circumstances were such that his dress was not the most creditable in point of elegance and fashion.

"That just makes me think," said Mr. Wontus. "What are we to do for proper wardrobes to attend the party in? Nidd, have you anything to suit?"

Mr. Nidd said he guessed he could make out, and Mr. Wontus guessed he could; but Wilkins? That gentleman's wardrobe was brief, or, in other words, it did not take any considerable length of time to pack or unpack.

The party left the table and adjourned to the sitting-room, where the subject was renewed. Mr. Wontus guessed that Tommy didn't want to go, and referred to that gentleman for an answer. Tommy guessed he didn't. Mr. Wilkins guessed that he'd not go, but Mr. Wontus would not hear of such a thing.

"Why, we don't know anybody," said Mr. Nidd.

"No," said Mr. Wontus.

"Got no proper clothing," said Mr. Wilkins, looking down at himself suggestively.

"We'll fix that," said Mr. Nidd. "Eh, Wontus?" Mr. Wontus nodded, and thus it was settled that three-fourths of the corps should attend the next party,—the last of the season.

Wednesday evening came, and with it came rain,—a patient, easy-going rain, which seemed to say that it had come with a determination to stay and shed its liquid influences upon all mankind. The storm was quite an inconvenience to most people, but to our friends it was quite a blessing, for Mr. Nidd said—and he was authority on such matters in the party—that any peculiarity of dress, or absence of dress-coats on such an evening, would be perfectly excusable.

The hours rolled round, and about half-past seven Mr. Wontus presented himself in the parlor, followed by Nidd, Wilkins, and Tommy, the latter a spectator; and, as they stood surveying themselves in the mirror, let me devote a few minutes to a description of each.

About Mr. Wontus there was nothing particularly noticeable, except that his shirt-collar appeared to be making an effort to embrace his ears, which effort Mr. Wontus was constantly frustrating by elevating his chin and smoothing down the collar with his hands. His shirt-bosom was rather elaborate,—that is, it fell in a bulging, wavy sort of manner over his noble bosom; but with these little exceptions he was faultless, in a black sack-coat, blue vest, and black pantaloons.

Mr. Nidd had rendered himself captivating in a blue cloth swallow-tail coat, ornamented with brass buttons. It came up very high about his neck and down very low about his legs;

the sleeves might have been longer, for as it was, every time Mr. Nidd extended his arm in any direction the sleeves would bashfully shrink up his arm, leaving his cuffs entirely exposed, or displaying, in a ravishing manner, his bony wrists. It was not a new garment by any means,—if I mistake not, the owner was married in it,—and the collar luxuriated in a superfluous quantity of pomatum, in which dust and oil were probably the most important, if not the only ingredients. The seams, too, were plainly visible to the naked eye, but, as the gentleman was not a proud man in point of dress, this made little difference. His dark-green vest was cut very low in front, and was rather short-waisted. His pants were of black cassimere, and resembled his coat in more than one respect. They had been cut in the fashion of some years before, were tight in the legs and low at the waist, thus givimg his long legs the semblance of a large pair of tongs. His feet were encased in a neat pair of boots,—as neat as his feet would permit,—whose legs were plainly outlined on the outside of his pants. At first sight, the casual observer might be induced to think that Mr. Nidd's pantaloons gave him trouble,—for he frequently pulled them up that they might meet his vest, and just as frequently pulled them down again that they might cover as much of his feet as was possible,—but this was not the case. Mr. Nidd was entirely at his ease. He had carefully brushed his hair, trimmed his whiskers, and oiled them, and, as he surveyed himself in the mirror, he looked as though he would like to say, "Much improved."

Mr. Wilkins mildly protested against changing his dress, for he saw that little improvement could be made. But both Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd insisted on his wearing certain articles of dress which they selected from among their own stock of clothing, and, as a "man of the world," Mr. Wilkins bowed in submission to fate. As he stood in the middle of the floor, he made a figure at once severely grotesque. One of Mr. Nidd's well-worn bottle-green frock-coats hung in loose folds about his back and shoulders, while a waistcoat of Mr. Wontus's, mammoth in its proportions, enveloped his chest and extended far down toward the abdominal regions. A pair of black pantaloons, also the property of Mr. Wontus, graced his lower extremities. These articles of dress had been made expressly for Mr. Wontus, and hence were very wide and

baggy in every part, but more particularly so about the hips. They were short in the legs, too,—that is, for Mr. Wilkins,—and altogether resembled, as well as I can imagine it, that picture of looseness which is intended to be represented by the phrase "a shirt on a bean-pole." Mr. Wilkins had made sundry tucks in different parts of his dress, and, with the assistance of a few towels and other articles, had filled out the parts, so that, so long as the tucks held good and the filling remained in its place, he presented the appearance of a gentleman who was growing suddenly corpulent, and whose tailor was anticipating further developments.

The Union Assemblies of Baltimore were probably the most social and enjoyable, as well as the most fashionable, parties given in the Union during the war. Gotten up and supported entirely and exclusively by the Union men of the city, the officers of the army and navy, as well as other distinguished Union men who happened to be passing through or stationed in the city, were invited to enjoy the hospitalities. As the name indicates, they were social assemblies in fact, for all who met there were looked upon as belonging to one common family. In this way men and lovely women were brought together, amid scenes that were never to be forgotten; and acquaintances formed among the people of the city, which. in many instances, ripened into the closest friendship. The greatest care was taken by the committees that no person who was tinged with disloyalty to the government should secure admittance, and thus those who were strangers to the people of the city were able to select for themselves friends from among those only who were friendly to the cause which they espoused. That such a thing was necessary those who mingled with the citizen population of the border State cities can very well understand. But to proceed.

"Nidd, you're looking young again," said Mr. Wontus, taking a survey of his friend; "I told you that a little out—a little recreation from business would do you good, and by gracious, it has."

"Think so?" said Mr. Nidd, elevating his eyebrows and casting side glances at Mr. Wontus.

"You'll be at your old game of flirting with the women again, I expect," laughed Mr. Wontus, as Nidd strode proudly across the room.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Nidd.

"If Mrs. Squirm could be here," said Mr. Wilkins, with animation, "then——"

"It's time to go!" cried Mr. Nidd, suddenly and almost fiercely.

"So it is," said Mr. Wontus, looking at his watch, and directing Thomas to wait up for them. The gentlemen proceeded to the assembly.

"Wilkins and friends," said the door-keeper, as the gentlemen presented themselves. "Wilkins and friends," echoed a committee-man, who looked over the list of enrolled guests. "All right, gentlemen; walk in."

"Secret service," said the committee-man, whispering to the door-keeper, and casting significant glances at the party.

The door-keeper winked his eye in a knowing way, and the gentlemen were ushered in in imposing style.

The opening promenade had not taken place, and the three-quarters of the Wontus Corps of Observation stood near the doorway and gazed with rapturous delight upon the living panorama of beautiful women and gallant men who passed them. Mr. Nidd's eyes fairly danced in their sockets, and his constant requests for Mr. Wontus to look here and then there, as some pleasing female face or form met his gaze, at length induced Mr. Wontus to move a little to one side and enjoy the scene uninterruptedly. In the gallery at the upper end of the room the fine band of the 2d Artillery was stationed. Along each side, arranged in couples or in groups, were officers of the ordnance department, cavalry, artillery, and infantry; each was chaperoned by a fair lady, whose sparkling eyes were rendering captive the sons of Mars.

The band plays a march, and in double files the company moves in grand review around the room. The scene was both new and inspiring to Mr. Wontus, and perhaps to Mr. Nidd, but the latter gentleman was so deep in his admiration for the ladies that he appeared lost to all else. Mr. Wilkins stood with his right foot extended, his left hand on his left hip, and his right in the upper button-hole of his coat, and surveyed the throng as it passed with dignified scrutiny.

"Mr. Jones, I'm delighted to be with you," said Mr. Wilkins, advancing toward a gentleman who was passing. "I've been looking for you; allow me to introduce my friends

—splendid affair—excels the court ball at St. Cloud. Mr. Jones allow me to introduce Colonel Wontus, Major Nidd,—particular friends of mine, and true blue to the core. (Aside.) In disguise—all of us—keep mum." And with a knowing look, he dragged Mr. Jones to one side and whispered some information in that gentleman's ear which the world will never know, leaving Wontus and Nidd to express their surprise at the titles which had just been bestowed upon them.

"Gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to the company. It is our desire that all who visit here should enjoy themselves." And taking the senior member of the corps by the arm, Mr. Jones excused himself to Wilkins and escorted them through the hall, and introduced them to the different ladies and gentlemen of his acquaintance. Some of the ladies smiled, and the gentlemen exchanged glances as the rather odd-looking gentlemen were introduced; but after a little whispering from Mr. Jones, in which the words "secret service" and "disguise" were easily distinguishable, the smiles invariably gave way to looks of awe. (The word "secret," no matter under what circumstances it may be spoken, invariably carries with it a mysterious influence, which no other word in the language can or ever does command.) Mr. Nidd, observing that considerable attention was being paid to them on every hand, became more enamored of himself than usual, and elevated his chin higher than ever.

At length the first quadrille was summoned by a blast of a trumpet, and a grand dash was made for places on the floor. Mr. Jones was engaged for the first set, and placing Mr. Wontus in the hands of a venerable-looking gentleman wearing the straps of a brigadier-general, and introducing Mr. Nidd to a lady who answered to the descriptive language of the three F's, viz., "fat, fair, and forty," he bounded away, and was soon lost in the throng.

To inform the reader that Mr. Wontus soon found himself in the refreshment-room with the venerable-looking gentleman with the brigadier's uniform, and that that gentleman (the brigadier) would persist in drinking numerous toasts to the secret service, until both gentlemen became a little mixed, would simply be what really happened. To add that Mr. Nidd frequently visited the refreshment-room during the evening, in company with the three F's, and that his pants would per-

sist in being either too long or too short, and that as the evening progressed he became more and more didactic in his manners, would simply be superfluous, for it belonged to Mr. Wilkins to play the part of the real hero of the occasion.

That gentleman presented a never-to-be-forgotten appearance, but his countenance was as clear and his manner as self-assured as though he was attired in the tip of the mode and the cynosure of all observers. Fashion, in choosing him as her own, would make a fearful mistake, and yet he stood there, after Mr. Jones had left with his friends, in an attitude which gave all who chose to look, to understand that he was in no way embarrassed or impressed by the beauty, life, and grandeur that surrounded him. Under such circumstances, inactivity and non-communication with those that were about him was equal to all the tortures of the rack. By accident or intent, an officer of infantry took his stand close by him. Now was the time, and Mr. Wilkins commenced the siege.

"Fine party, sir,—seen nothing to excel it since the grand *fête* in Venice in honor of the Doge in '57. Ever been in Venice?" Mr. Wilkins paused for a reply.

The officer surveyed the rather singular-looking gentleman for a moment, and answered:

"No, sir."

"Splendid place; girls beautiful—large black eyes—dark hair—dark skins—real Venuses." (A pause.) "Any place where a thirsty man could wet his whistle?" continued Mr. Wilkins, in an under-tone.

"Up-stairs," said the officer, a captain, moving his head in the direction of the refreshment-room.

"Thanks, colonel, thanks," said Mr. Wilkins, in his most impressive manner. "But, pardon me, will you do me the favor to tell me that gentleman's name?" (He pointed with his finger.) "I think I met him at Moscow a year or two since."

There is nothing like a modest-looking and yet familiar man to take hold of and hold one's attention. I look at one of these gentlemen with the same absorbing, anxious interest that I do at a loaded cannon, expecting that it will go off—when it does go off—in some unexpected moment and direction.

The officer looked on Mr. Wilkins as if he was one of this sort of cannon, and after giving Mr. Wilkins the desired information, seemed to await the next explosion. But it never

came. Mr. Wilkins no sooner heard the gentleman's name pronounced audibly by the captain, and pronounced it himself to insure correctness, than, throwing his left hand in the hollow of his back and keeping his right in the lapel of his coat, he marched up to the gentleman and spoke:

"Pardon me, sir, if I intrude; but, if I mistake not, you are Mr. Patterson?" Mr. Wilkins paused for a reply.

"You are right, sir," said the gentleman, pleasantly; "that is my name."

"Let me see," soliloquized Mr. Wilkins, in an attitude of deep thought, "I was endeavoring to place you,—remember your name very well, but can't place you to save me." And again Mr. Wilkins fell to thinking.

"I've traveled considerably," said the gentleman: "South America, Mexico, and our own continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific; in fact, pretty generally everywhere."

"Let me see," said Mr. Wilkins, contemplatively, "Potsdam,—ever been at Potsdam?"

"Prussia?"

"Yes; grand review,—splendid military spectacle,—23d of May, '59."

The gentleman nodded in the affirmative.

"Glad to meet you once again," cried Mr. Wilkins, and seizing the gentleman's hand he shook it warmly.

Mr. Patterson could not be brought to remember the familiar face of Mr. Wilkins, although that gentleman pointed out, by means of an imaginary diagram, which he drew with the toe of his boot on the floor, the exact location and relative positions of the gentleman and himself on the particular 23d of May. He even went so far as to repeat the very language which Count Seidelitz used on the occasion of their introduction, and described, in precise language, how his friend was standing beneath the shade of a tree, with one foot resting on a bench and a malacca cane under his arm, at the very moment the introduction took place. Quite a group had collected around the gentlemen, attracted by Mr. Wilkins's singular appearance and animated manner, and this made that gentleman anxious that he should be acknowledged. At length the gentleman did think that he had a faint recollection of the matter, which Mr. Wilkins at once clinched by saying, "Certainly you have," and resumed the hand-shaking.

This was the point that Mr. Wilkins had been watching for, and taking the gentleman by the arm he insisted on Mr. Patterson joining him in a short "commodicum," and bowing to the group which surrounded him, he absolutely compelled his new acquaintance to show him to the refreshment-saloon and there help him to some liquor and drink to Auld Lang Syne. From this moment he was once more "a man of the world." He managed to impress in a mysterious way all who came in contact with him of the importance of the secret service, and he enjoined on all who learned his name that he desired to remain entirely and completely *incog.*, and as an evidence of his sincerity, he pointed, with no little gravity, to his dress, which was certainly calculated to impress all who saw it with the idea that it was either intended as a disguise or that the wearer was a lunatic. To Mr. Wilkins this made no particular difference. It had been selected by Messrs. Wontus and Nidd, and he felt that whatever odium was attached to it, all of it certainly belonged to them.

How many times he endeavored to find a partner, and how many times he was refused, and how many times he solaced himself by visiting the refreshment-saloon, I cannot undertake to say, but the times were certainly numerous. The more he was refused the more he pressed himself, until, at length, his importunities became almost unbearable. He felt that he was not understood, or at least not appreciated; and where he would have stopped can never be recorded, for it transpired in course of time that Mr. Wontus indignantly denied, in his conversation with the brigadier, that either he or any of his party belonged to the secret service, and to make assurances doubly sure, he further said that any man who said that he or any of his party belonged to, or had, in any manner, the remotest connection with the service, was an impostor and should be kicked. This becoming noised about, taken in connection with Mr. Wilkins's excessive "freshness," soon brought that gentleman in the midst of a throng of excited and angry men, who insisted on his leaving the room at once. Mr. Wilkins would argue the point with them. He belonged to Mr. Wontus's party, and that gentleman, or Mr. Nidd, could prove him to be anything else than an impostor. They laughed at him, and quoted Mr. Wontus's language used to the brigadier. He asked to be allowed to seek Mr. Nidd or Mr. Wontus, but

they would hear nothing except his immediate departure. Mr. Wilkins was becoming dejected. A sight met his gaze, it was Nidd with the three F's hanging on his arm. Mr. Wilkins called to him, but Mr. Nidd was deaf to all but the charming voice of the F's. The situation became desperate. He must see Mr. Nidd,—that gentleman could untangle the matter. He undertook to fly to his side, but the undertaking was misunderstood to be an effort to escape, and a dozen hands took hold of him. He struggled, and more hands took hold. The tucks in his pants commenced giving way, and the towels, etc., began to show signs of uneasiness.

"Out with him!" was shouted on all sides; and just at a most critical moment, when his pantaloons appeared to have a desire to take leave of his person, and the filling of his breast had sought a resting-place under his right arm, he was raised from the floor and conveyed—one grand, struggling mass of ill-assorted clothes—to the door and thence down the stairs, where he was liberated and directed to depart, amid the laughter and jeers of the company.

It was rather late when Mr. Wontus and Nidd arrived at the hotel, and they expressed considerable astonishment when they found that Mr. Wilkins had reached there before them. He pleaded sickness as the cause of his leaving the assembly so unceremoniously, and as the gentlemen were in utter ignorance as to the true cause, the party soon after retired.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOMICILES THE CORPS IN THE CAPITAL OF THE NATION, AND TREATS OF SICKNESS, LOVE, AND OTHER THINGS.

NOTHING of particular interest transpired during the remaining time that the corps spent in the Monumental City. Mr. Wilkins was entirely recovered from his sickness the next morning, and the party were all enjoying the most excellent health and spirits. The more Mr. Wontus saw of the world the better he liked it, and Mr. Nidd, although less expressive, was none the less charmed by the novelty of being entirely

free from care. That Mr. Thomson was delighted, certainly none who have noticed his fidelity to Mr. Wontus can question.

The morning at length arrived for the corps to take its departure, and it bid adieu to Baltimore with feelings akin to regret.

As they passed along in the cars toward the capital of the nation, Mr. Wontus could scarcely restrain himself from asking the conductor to stop the train, that he might converse with and assist the soldiers who guarded every mile of the road. It was the first real indication of war that he had seen, and the tenderest emotions of his sympathetic bosom were awakened. The train would not stop and Mr. Wontus knew it, so he bought all the daily newspapers he could from the newsdealer on the train, and as he passed along he dropped them from the window, that the lonely guardians of his peace and safety might at least know that they were remembered. The papers becoming exhausted, he fell to throwing out money, and although Mr. Nidd expostulated with him, he persisted in doing so until the train moved into the depot at Washington.

The depot of any of the great railroad lines, during the rebellion, was an object of peculiar interest. The strange faces; the incidents which graduated "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," were affairs, not of days or hours, but of moments. Each click of the clock pointed to a moment pregnant with startling events, and faces marked with all the different passions which fill the human breast, made up one grand picture, which having been once seen, can never be obliterated by the march of time. That the Washington depot, of the solitary line then leading to that great centre, from the populous North, West, and East, should be particularly noticeable is not surprising.

Grief-stricken mothers in search of wounded sons; disheartened wives in search of missing husbands; bereaved sisters prepared to follow a loved soldier-brother to a premature grave; men seeking office; politicians seeking jobs; statesmen, soldiers, seamen, and men of every cast, condition, and complexion, were here to be seen, the whole a living panorama of humanity, done in such colors and shapes as to defy the pencil of the most astute artist.

Each was intent on the business which brought him or her to this grand centre, and the commoner feelings of respect and

love gave place to one of supreme selfishness. At least Mr. Wontus thought so, when he observed the grand rush and dash made by each and every individual to keep ahead of his neighbor, and reach the street.

Having reached the avenue, Mr. Wontus insisted on a halt, and for the space of a few moments was apparently lost in contemplation of the wondrous pile of marble, which stood before him, and marked its grand outline against the clear, blue sky.

"Have a hack, sir? Ride up, sir?" greeted his ears in showers; and drums were beating, and armed men marching in every direction, but he was deaf to all; his eyes were fixed upon the Capitol.

Here was where the great men of the nation assembled; here it was that speeches were uttered that made the very earth tremble, and made Europe look with undisguised emotion upon the infant nation of the New World.

Ah, it was a great sight for Mr. Wontus; it kindled emotions in his bosom that were strangers there before, and he longed for the moment when he should be allowed to fall down and worship at the feet of the great men, whose greatness stared him full in the face from the columns of every newspaper in the land.

"Come along," said he, at length, "we have plenty of time before us (it was not yet noon); we can let our baggage remain in the hands of the express company until we are ready to send for it." And leading the way himself, the corps passed along up the avenue without seeming to have the remotest idea as to where they were likely to halt.

Reaching Second Street, Mr. Wontus took a hasty survey of the conservatory, where everybody, except those who pay for it, are permitted to gather flowers, and expressed a desire to pay it a visit. Mr. Nidd suggested that they return to Baltimore, and was answered by an incredulous look from Mr. Wontus.

"Fine woman—splendid!" said Nidd, half aloud.

Mr. Wontus looked in every direction, but not seeing anybody particularly fine-looking, cast a glance at his friend, and asked, "Where?" He was compelled to repeat his question.

"Baltimore!" said Mr. Nidd, coolly.

"The three F's!" cried Mr. Wontus, laughing, the truth

darting into his mind. "Come, old boy," he continued, punching Mr. Nidd in the side with his thumb, "this will never do."

But whither were they to turn their footsteps? None knew, and they stood on the sidewalk in a condition of uncertainty bordering on uneasiness.

"Must have some place," said Mr. Wilkins, ramming his hand first into one pocket and then into another, and then returning to the first one and turning it inside out, and repeating the same process with his other pockets in regular order.

"Must have some place," echoed Mr. Wontus, abstractedly, and then he silently contemplated Mr. Wilkins in the process of turning his pockets inside out. "What's the matter?" he asked, at length.

"Nothing partic'lar," said Mr. Wilkins, growing more industrious than ever.

"What are you looking for?" asked Mr. Wontus, commandingly.

Mr. Wilkins hesitated for some time before replying, but at length faltered out, in an apologetic way, that he thought he had some money, but he believed he hadn't, after all.

"Money?" said Mr. Wontus. "What do you want with money?"

This was what Mr. Wilkins had been fishing for,—the question, not the money, for he knew he had none of the latter,—and he quickly replied:

"You see, sir, if I could go into one of these saloons and ask the landlord, it might be that he could tell me where to find rooms; but I don't like to go in without taking something. I was just lookin' to see if I couldn't raise enough for a short 'commodicum.'"

"A good idea," said Mr. Nidd.

"Very," said Mr. Wontus, comprehending; and handing Mr. Wilkins a quarter, he directed him to see what could be done.

The money once in Wilkins's hand, that gentleman lost no time in finding his way into a neighboring saloon, from which he emerged in a few moments, his face beaming with undisguised satisfaction, and a card in his hand.

"Got a place?" asked Mr. Nidd.

"Splendid!"

"Where?" asked Mr. Wontus, with interest.

"No. —, D Street, two rooms, ample accommodations, widow woman, cheap, very private, central, all hunkey."

And without allowing time for any questions to be asked, Mr. Wilkins leads the way briskly up the avenue to Third Street, and up Third to D Street, on which street, with great familiarity, he walked up to a door and rang the bell. A lady waited on the door. The business being explained, the party was admitted, and after the rooms had been examined a bargain was struck, and Mr. Wilkins dispatched to the express office for the baggage.

"Moxley must be seen immediately," said Mr. Wontus; "he can put us on the right course."

"Certainly," said Mr. Nidd.

The two gentlemen were sitting in one of their two rooms, looking out of the window, and Thomas Thomson was surveying the various articles of furniture and the pictures that graced the wall.

"Better leave it until to-morrow," said Mr. Nidd, and Mr. Wontus making no objection, it was agreed that the visit to Mr. Wontus's friend (Mr. Moxley), who was a clerk in one of the departments, but which one Mr. Wontus was unable to say, should be postponed until the following day.

The latitude of Washington is particularly agreeable in the spring, because there is little or no monotony about it. The clerk of the weather seems to have been particularly instructed with respect to the latitude of Washington, and impressed with the fact that the residents belong pretty generally to that class who desire variety. Hence it is never very warm or very cold, or very sunshiny or very cloudy, very long at a time, but agreeably alternates between the different conditions. Sometimes, however, with a little—just a little—favoritism toward one or the other of the four.

It had been clear and pleasant when the party arrived at the capital, but while Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd were looking out of the window the sky became suddenly overcast with clouds, and this was soon followed by such a storm of rain as is seldom seen on this side of the tropics. The gentlemen looked on in silence.

"I reckon it'll rain," said Mr. Thomson, approaching the window and looking out at the rain, which came down as

though each stream was poured through a funnel. Mr. Nidd gave the speaker a look of disgust, and Mr. Wontus became suddenly interested in his right foot.

"Gout?" said Nidd, looking at the foot.

"Rheumatics, I think," said Mr. Wontus. "Terrible climate; Tommy, have a fire made here as soon as possible; roast a man one hour and freeze him the next. Oh, oh, oh!" cried Mr. Wontus, seizing his foot with both hands and twisting his mouth and eyes so as to make faces which the clown in a pantomime would be delighted to imitate. "Had it bad before, but never so bad as this." And again he indulged in numerous, long-drawn-out pronunciations of the vowel O.

Mr. Nidd, contrary to custom, proffered his sympathies, and Tommy ran about the room like a madman, seeking for something with which to alleviate Mr. Wontus's pain. "What shall I do?" he cried.

"Go to the devil—for a doctor!" cried Mr. Wontus, looking up at his servant with enraged eyes.

Had Mr. Wontus directed Thomas to proceed directly to the top of the dome of the Capitol and there take his stand on a single and particular hair on the head of Miss America (who surveys her vast domain from that position), Thomas would gladly have undertaken the rather difficult task; as it was, the order to go to his satanic majesty for a doctor was fixed in his mind theoretically, and it never occurred to him that it was very nearly impossible to execute the command literally until he had reached the street. Once there, he was in a worse quandary than ever. He had a very erroneous idea in his head that Mr. Wontus, his guardian, almost father, was going to die, and this lent its wings to his steps, and he flew to the first door that came in his way and asked for a doctor. It is hard to go amiss in a search for the disciples of Æsculapius nowadays. In this instance, Mr. Thomson's call—the first door—was rewarded by a young gentleman promising to be with Mr. Wontus in a few moments. And he was as good as his word, for Tommy had scarcely given answer to the questions that were showered upon him than the door-bell rang and the doctor was shown in.

"Don't make an infernal blunder and call it gout," cried Mr. Wontus, interspersing his remarks with numerous large and small O's, as the professional gentleman examined his foot.

The physician whom Tommy had called in to see Mr. Wontus had evidently taken one or more lessons in "acumen," and the disease was accordingly pronounced an acute rheumatism. Giving a few directions as to the treatment of the foot, the doctor passed judgment on the weather—as is usual—and bowed himself out, promising to call again in the morning. It is a little singular, but nevertheless noticeable at least, that the presence and opinion of a physician generally brings with it a more comfortable feeling on the part of the patient, and Mr. Wontus was no exception to the rule. He felt easier the moment the doctor entered the door, and when he departed the patient was loud in his praise of the gentleman's great ability and discernment.

Mr. Wontus had the gout!

To be thus crippled at the very outset, and amid such stirring scenes as were constantly transpiring almost within their hearing, was a matter which weighed heavily on the corps. Mr. Wontus, at best, could but hobble about his room with the assistance of a chair; yet, while he deeply deplored his own situation, he also sympathized with the other members of the party, and insisted on their going out and enjoying themselves, and they did as Mr. Wontus requested.

For the first day or two the invalid moaned and groaned in solitude and without complaint, but on the third day he became peevish, and avowed that nobody cared anything about him. Of course, each member individually denied the soft impeachment. Mr. Wilkins was particularly verbose in explaining how it came that *he* had not given Mr. Wontus the attention he desired to. There were so many high officers of the army and navy about the city that he found that it would be greatly to the corps' advantage in the future for him to cultivate their acquaintance. Mr. Wontus groaned assent, and the corps went on as before, with the honorable exception of Thomas Thomson, who, by dint of great perseverance, managed to spare time enough to attend to his master during the moments of leisure allowed him by Mr. Wilkins, who insisted on Thomas accompanying him, and waiting at a little distance, during the first-named gentleman's visits to the different dignitaries.

Mr. Wontus promised a large reward to the doctor if he would make him well in "short metre," and the doctor promised that he would; but his acumen taught him that the

moment his patient was well that moment his fees ceased, and as doctors,—young doctors,—like other people, do not wish to give up a good thing, Mr. Wontus was destined to take nameless quantities of medicine and undergo sundry operations, all of which displayed the skill of the doctor, if it did nothing more.

How long a modest, unobtrusive, uninquiring gentleman might live in any one of the numerous lodging-houses of Washington without knowing who lived in the room above, or below, or on either side of him, is but a matter of conjecture; and this brings me to the duty of recording the fact that one day, while Mr. Wontus was in his room alone and unattended by any one, a soft knocking came at his door. It was an unusual occurrence, and, with some pain and not a little trouble, he reached the door and opened it. A pair of wondering eyes, looking from a fresh, handsome little face, which face was surrounded by a mass of crisp, curly hair, looked up into his face, and stood still in innocent bewilderment. It is a part of such natures as that of Mr. Wontus to be fond of children, and the moment he caught sight of the child the painful frown, which a moment before had taken possession of his brow, gave place to a smile and a look of love, and he urged the child to come into his room. That he would have succeeded in securing the company of his little visitor there can be no doubt in the minds of those who know how kindly he could look when he wanted to; but a weak, feminine voice frustrated his plans by calling the child to come up-stairs.

Mr. Wontus was astonished. That he had a neighbor whose presence he knew not of until just now was unmistakable, and as the child commenced climbing the stairs, he shut the door and threw himself on the bed. Absence from excitement to one who has been accustomed to it will make the dullest mind curious, and as Mr. Wontus lay on the bed his thoughts turned to the voice, and his curiosity demanded the satisfaction of knowing who it belonged to. From that moment he ceased to be peevish, and instead of complaining at the want of attention on the part of the members of the corps he insisted that they should go out and enjoy themselves, and made sundry advances on Mr. Wilkins's pay, to allow that gentleman a wider and more influential sphere of action.

Hour by hour he sat there alone, thinking of that voice, and imagining all sorts of situations that that voice *might* fall

into, by which it (the voice) would be compelled to call on him for assistance. His mental condition was similar to that governing passion in Mrs. Toodles. He *might* be at the door, and the voice *might* tumble down-stairs, and then it would be his duty to pick it up; or *he* might be taken suddenly ill, and the voice *might* hear him and rush to his assistance. These and a great many more situations of similar import passed through his mind, but still nothing transpired out of the usual routine. If the mother had eyes like the child he should love her; he felt that that was a fixed fact, but he kept his secret, and the corps was none the wiser, at least not then.

A day passed, and still another. The doctor found that Mr. Wontus's foot would convalesce in spite of him, and as the weather was now clear and mild, the patient was advised to take a little exercise in the fresh air. To the utter astonishment of all, Mr. Wontus flatly declined to do anything of the kind, and pleaded a probable relapse. Mr. Nidd brought forth the most seductive arguments, and Mr. Wilkins grew eloquent over the sights that were to be seen and enjoyed; but Mr. Wontus was deaf and blind to all the charms spread before him, and, besides, insisted that the other members of the corps should go out and enjoy themselves to their fullest desire. He was very comfortable, and since the pain had almost left his foot he rather enjoyed remaining in the house. It was very sly in the old gentleman to do that, and he felt that he was playing the part of a hypocrite, but then he didn't know what *might* happen, and he excused and justified himself on the ground that it was all for the best.

During the hours that the friends were in-doors Mr. Wontus's foot appeared to be seriously influenced by their presence, for at such times it was full of shooting pains, which, strange to say, shot off entirely the moment the foot was relieved of their presence.

War demoralizes a great many people, and it looks just now as if the demoralizing fever had taken serious hold of Mr. Wontus, for up to now he has proven himself on all occasions to be a man of sterling integrity and truth. But—

> "Love is full of unbefitting strains,
> All wanton as a child, skipping and vain;
> Formed by the eye, and therefore like the eye;
> Full of strange shapes, of habits, and of forms."

We take it, therefore, that Mr. Wontus was in love. With

whom? A fantasia; a thing of the imagination; a being that he had never laid eyes on. But how was he to make "its" acquaintance? This question he asked himself a score of times, and each time left it unanswered. Should he buy a flute and serenade beneath her window, or, what was better, at the foot of the stairs? Injudicious, because more than one person might claim the serenade; impracticable, because he had never played a note in his life. Should he hire the Marine Band? No, that would create inquiry. A happy thought struck him: he would write her a sonnet.

With great preparation he seated himself at the table with paper and ink before him. He dipped the pen into the ink, and was about to write, when it occurred to him that he did not know "its" (for thus he termed the charming unknown) name. He would write to "its" eyes! Again he dipped his pen. But what color were "its" eyes? Blue, black, brown, gray, hazel, or a combination of all the shades? Again he faltered, and his face assumed a grave and thoughtful expression. Now came desperation. Yes, he would write! Black was his favorite color, and per consequence "it" must have black eyes. Were they large and expressive, or small and dull? He dismissed the thought with an expletive, and sat with the paper before him. But the Muses would not come at his call, and he essayed again and again; "I would give" was as far as he could get. In vain he walked the floor and ran his fingers through his hair. The inspiration had flown, and he was just considering whether he should send anything at all, when a gentle tap came at the door and set his heart all a flutter. "It" was there! that knock was a woman's; and, with marvelous speed, the paper was snatched from the table and consigned to the closet, and things generally put out of sight.

"Come in!" cried the gentleman, throwing himself into a chair, and belying his looks by trying to appear disinterested and unconcerned.

The landlady made her appearance, and a shade of displeasure passed over Mr. Wontus's countenance.

"Excuse me, sir," said the lady.

"Certainly," said Mr. Wontus, demurely. "Walk in."

"I called," continued the lady, "to ask you if you wouldn't allow your men to come up and assist me in moving some of the furniture in the room above. I have a sick lady there,—

poor thing! I'm afraid she's going to die,—and she wants to be able to see out of the window from her bed."

"Have my men? Certainly not, madam!" cried Mr. Wontus, springing to his feet, with sympathy marked on every lineament of his countenance. "Have my men! You shall have *me*, madam!" And despite the landlady's efforts to dissuade him, Mr. Wontus would hear of nothing but the acceptance of his personal services.

If it is true that "sympathy is akin to love," then it should follow that love was akin to sympathy; but since it makes no material difference, I take leave of the argument which might be brought to bear on the question, and proceed to relate the fact that, without exactly knowing how, Mr. Wontus found himself in the apartment above his own.

Deeply sympathetic at all times, Mr. Wontus took a survey of the meanly-furnished room, with its rickety bedstead and pallid occupant, and the exultant, expectant look of love which had a moment before overspread his countenance suddenly gave place to one of commiseration and sorrow. His heart was too full for utterance, and his eyes were either riveted upon the bed or wandering from the bed to the prattling child at the window. The day was bright and beautiful without, but the heavy though ragged curtains which shaded the solitary dormer-window threw an additional gloom over the already gloomy attic. Coarse, well-worn strips of dirty carpet covered the floor; two or three broken chairs and a high, old-fashioned bureau stood like spectres in different parts of the room; a small stove and a table by the bedside completed the inventory. Mr. Wontus was not accustomed to the sight of poverty and misery, and as he assisted in placing the furniture a crystal tear came stealing into his eye. His thoughts were busy with plans for the alleviation of the suffering woman, who thanked him with her great black eyes in language which no words could express. Quickly, as if actuated by some sudden resolve, he drew out his wallet, and as he placed a note in the dainty fingers he kissed the ruby lips of the child. The tear was gone, but he blushed as he caught sight of the landlady's eye fixed inquiringly on his. No word escaped his lips, save a few almost inaudible expressions for the improvement of the sufferer, and he walked from the room and sought the privacy of his own apartment.

It can never be known what Mr. Wontus's thoughts really were on this occasion, but since he felt it necessary to take Thomas Thomson into his confidence, and made a regular pack-horse of that gentleman in transporting provisions, coal, and other necessities to the room above, it is reasonable to believe that there was something of importance on his mind. Day after day he visited the sick-room, bringing light and pleasure with him, until he finally commenced to believe what he had never believed before, and that was that he was of some use in the world after all. Such was the delicacy of his thoughts that the other members of the corps, Tommy excepted, were kept in ignorance of the facts, although their suspicions were aroused, and during all his visits to the invalid he had never so much as inquired her name or her history. He had thought of it often, and one evening, while Tommy was busy at the fire, he ventured to ask of the lady a recital of her troubles. What afterwards occurred will find a place in another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SICK WOMAN'S STORY—THE RIVALS—LOVE—HATE—MATRIMONY—MISFORTUNE—A MAN WHICH WONTUS THINKS HE KNOWS—THE ARREST.

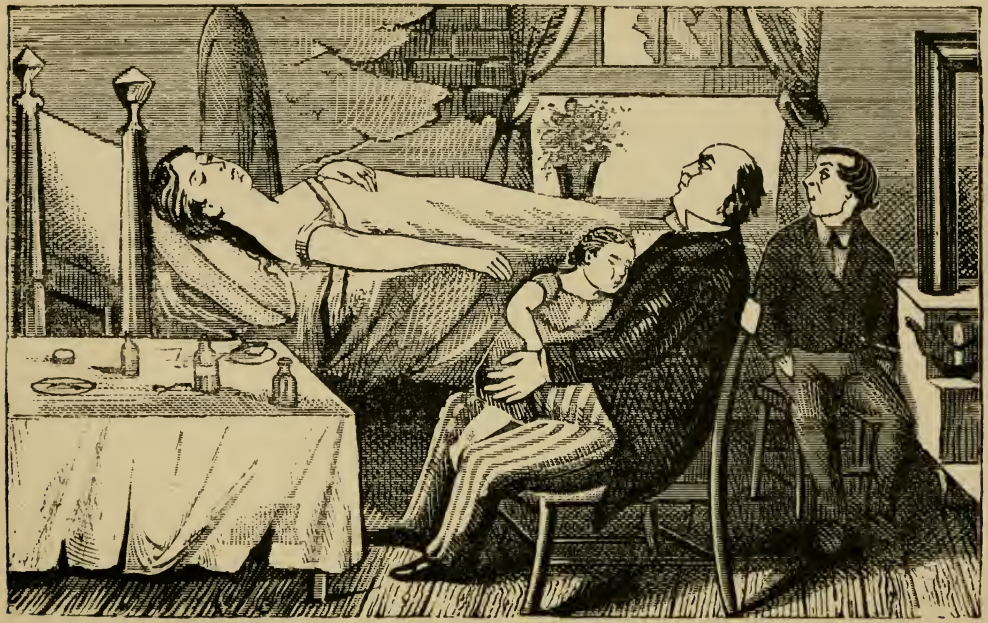
Mr. Wontus sat on a chair by the bedside of the sick woman, and, as this may appear a little out of the line of strict propriety, as it is talked about in modern society, I may be excused for mentioning the fact that it was not known but that the gentleman was married; in fact, his appearance (and some people judge by that) went a great way toward impressing one with the idea that he was both a husband and a father. At any rate, he had been so delicate in his attentions, had shown such noble qualities of heart and mind, that the propriety of his sitting by the sick woman's bedside never occurred to anybody, if I may except the landlady, who seemed to take a sudden dislike to the sick lady and pay her as little attention as was admissible, but at the same time was quite courteous and attentive to Mr. Wontus, all of which Mr. Wontus did not notice.

As the unfortunate woman lay reclining upon her support of pillows, smoothed and arranged by the kind hands of Mr. Wontus, she was beautiful in her misery. Her raven hair, brushed carelessly back from a noble forehead, fell in wavy masses upon the pillows, and gave to her pale face a background which displayed the beauty of her features in an almost artistic manner. Her mouth was small and finely chiseled, and her lips, though pale and bloodless, wore an almost constant curl of *hauteur*. Sickness and trouble had rendered her the wreck of a woman who, in her better days, could, and no doubt did, command the homage of the courtiers and gallants of her circle. Her manner was easy and ladylike under all circumstances, and she appeared to be possessed of the pleasurable faculty of knowing how to make those she came in contact with perfectly at ease; and Mr. Wontus wondered, as he sat there by her side, that he should feel much more comfortable than he had ever known himself to feel before in the society of a woman.

"My story, sir," said she, at length, "is but a poor one at best, and to you may be a thrice-told tale; yet, if you desire to hear it, I will tell you." And she looked at Mr. Wontus with her large eyes, until that gentleman asked Tommy if it wasn't very warm, and directed him to open the stove door; then, turning to the lady, he assured her that he had no desire to be inquisitive, "but—but——"

He could go no further.

"This terrible war; this wicked war; what misery has it entailed!" She paused, but did not seem to notice Mr. Wontus's perplexity. "But for it—no, no, it would have been the same!" She closed her eyes for a moment, and appeared to be thinking. "My native place is in Alabama," she continued, her delicate white hand nervously clutching the bedcovering, "and my family are direct descendants of the Oglethorpes, one of the oldest families in the State, sir. My father was one of the most respected men in the State, and held many positions of importance and honor by the will of the people,—a man of generous heart, a chivalric gentleman of the old school, and so much unlike the miserable, grasping wretches who now fill this city, as to seem to belong to another race. My mother died when I was quite young, and, being the only child, every emotion of my father's heart was cen-



"MR. WONTUS SIGHED, AND TOOK THE CHILD UPON HIS KNEE."

tered in me. I was never sent to school, but was educated at home, under the eye of my father, by a governess. This woman, although a native of the State of Massachusetts, was wedded to the South and the Southern people, and her every energy seems now to have been devoted toward instilling into my very blood a love for the institutions of my State and a disregard for the cringing, mean-spirited people of the North.

"It may have been," she continued, after another pause, "that these principles were inculcated by the direction of my father; but whether they were or not, He who reigns on high knows that I have lived to see that chivalry is not confined to the South or meanness to the North."

Mr. Wontus said he guessed she was right, and she continued:

"I was but little over sixteen when I first made the acquaintance of Lathrop Blakely, a young gentleman of fine appearance and engaging manners, a resident of Ohio, who came to our parts every season to purchase cotton for his father's factory. It seems now, although it did not then, that my father was under many monetary obligations to Mr. Blakely, for, while we used to call him a Yankee and an abolitionist, yet he was always received at my father's plantation with the greatest courtesy. He was calm and mild in his manners, and so entirely different from the young gentlemen that I had been in the custom of meeting, that I was pleased with his attentions and charmed by his frank, open manner. I felt that he loved me, and only waited a favorable opportunity to make it known; and I knew that I loved him,—yes, loved him deeply, sincerely."

Mr. Wontus sighed and took the child upon his knee (where it soon fell asleep), because he felt that it was necessary that he should do or say something just at that particular moment.

"Time wore on," continued the invalid, "and the happiness which had filled my young heart for nearly two years was about to be crowned by the event of my marriage with Lathrop Blakely (she raised her hands to her eyes and sighed). Adjoining our plantation was that of a gentleman, whose name I shall not mention,—a gentleman of equal standing and wealth with my father,—whose family consisted of a daughter about my age and a son a few years my senior. I had danced and ridden with this young man, and admired him for his bold,

defiant, and chivalric bearing. A man of splendid proportions, with easy, graceful manners, and a jaunty, careless carriage, he was just such a man as most girls would admire; and while I, in common with others, *did* admire him, yet I did not love him. Like all others in our section, he had been educated a Southron, and if there was anything that he prided himself on, it was his superiority over Mr. Blakely. I had often listened to his cutting remarks concerning the birth and business of my lover, and also to his vows of regard for myself. The first I was accustomed to hear from childhood, the second I laughed over, and never gave it a moment of serious consideration, until one day he threw himself at my feet, vowed his love, and pleaded for me to be his wife. Up to this moment life had been but a dream. I hesitated, because his flashing eye warned me of the passion which filled him, and at length succeeded in sending him away with an evasive answer, and without confessing my love for Mr. Blakely.

"Thus far I had acted independently in my affairs, but the moment my dream of undisturbed happiness was dispelled I sought the advice of my father. He was grieved and surprised at first, because, as he said, it was very well to have business with these Northerners, but to become related to them by marriage, and more particularly an abolitionist, was something he could never agree to. My grief at these words knew no bounds. I shut myself up in my room and refused to see anybody for days, when at length my father insisted on me seeing my neighbor-lover, and informed me that while he could not approve of my marriage with Mr. Blakely, yet it was necessary that nothing should appear on the surface at present, and my letters should be written in the usual vein; on the other hand, he was of the opinion that our neighbor was the most fitting match, because of his high-toned social standing in the community,—his birth and fortune. Another thing was the fact that our plantations were adjoining and our negroes had intermarried. He did not want to influence me, he said; but he presented such a doleful picture of Mr. Blakely, whose father might have been but a laborer, and suggested the probabilities of the two contiguous plantations becoming as one, that, without appearing to do so, my mind was half-made up as to my future conduct ere I had time to think the subject over. The idea of being a Yankee's wife was new to me; it had never

presented itself to me before in that light, but now that I came to think it over, the very thought was repugnant.

"From that moment my behavior toward my neighbor-lover was altered. We sang together, rode together, and scarcely a day passed but we saw each other. He was so different from Mr. Blakely that I often wondered at myself when I thought over some of my actions; but he seemed so noble, was so fine-looking, and withal so gallant, that I almost compelled myself to love him without knowing exactly why, except that his family was one of the oldest in the country and it was my duty as a Southern woman.

"Up to this time no particular day had been named for our nuptials. Letters had passed between Mr. Blakely and myself as usual, but with a certain ambiguity on my part. Time passed swiftly by, and the day was drawing near for the regular visit of my affianced. I had nerved myself for the interview which I knew must come, and looked with confidence to my new love for support. He came and we met. On his part all was love and tenderness; on my part, polite courtesy and the part of a friend. I dared not break off the match suddenly, for fear of injuring some of my father's arrangements, but Satan came to my assistance and assisted me in the task.

"He asked me if I had ceased to love him, and I returned evasive replies. He wished me to name the day on which the nuptials should be celebrated, but I laughed the matter off. I had suddenly grown giddy-headed and trifling, and many times during his stay I played the part of a coquette. I would listen to his plans for our future, would acquiesce in them in a gay, thoughtless manner, and in a moment after would join my neighbor-lover, and go galloping away through the fields, leaving Mr. Blakely to entertain himself as best he might. To none of these actions did he once object; occasionally twitting me with my new fancy was all the notice he bestowed upon them. Added to this were different slurs and inuendoes from my neighbor-lover whenever they met, and I fancied at times that a spark of anger gathered in his eye. If it did it was momentary, and no word of complaint escaped his lips. At first this angered me, but when I came to remember our relationship and witness his patient, loving manner, I could but admire him, and I felt my heart growing nearer and nearer to him each day.

"It was the latter end of November, 186–. The whole South was in a blaze of excitement. An abolition President had been elected; the negroes were to be set free; a war of races was to follow, and the people of the South were to be trodden underfoot. Mr. Blakely was still with us, and I frequently heard that the young men of our section had threatened him with violence. But he did not hurry himself, and I longed to tell him of his danger, but was prevented by fear of the word 'traitor.' December came. South Carolina declared her independence, and the Southern men who held places in the army and navy were coming home to take part in the grand fight for liberty and independence. Still, Mr. Blakely remained to finish up his business and to receive my answer.

"Men waited on him to have his views on the subject, and he gave them without hesitation, and with so much candor and earnestness that none could dislodge him. He believed that the whole affair would blow over when the people became more familiar with the real facts and the ambitious aims of the demagogues who had set themselves up as leaders. He denied that the government desired to assail the institutions of the South in any manner, and confessed that he had voted for Lincoln. These views becoming noised about, different gentlemen waited upon my father and chided him for harboring such an individual; for myself, I could not respect, much less love, a man who voted for Lincoln, and I informed him of my determination to cancel the engagement. He appealed to my sense of honor, but I was deaf alike to his appeals and his entreaties, and left the house to spend a few days with our neighbors, to rid myself of his presence."

Wontus changed his position, and seemed desirous to say something, but no sound passed his lips, and the invalid continued:

"Arriving at my friend's house, at sunset, I was somewhat surprised to find groups of men and horses in different parts of the lawn, all the men in high glee over some event of the future or of the present. I passed into the house, and there found quite a number of my acquaintances, who greeted me as a Yankee. I indignantly inquired the cause for their thus addressing me, and was answered by my neighbor-lover to the effect that the Yankee, Blakely, had insulted the Southern

people; that he was a spy, and that it had been determined upon to give him a coat of tar and feathers and send him home. The ladies and gentlemen were in high spirits, and only waited the coming of some others who had promised to be present. As we stood there, chatting and drawing word-pictures of the scene about to take place, a note was put in my hand from Mr. Blakely, which informed me that my treatment had caused him to suddenly make up his mind to return to Ohio, and he would leave early on the following morning.

"'There!' I cried, walking to my neighbor-lover and putting the note into his hands, 'who says I'm a Yankee now?'"

Mr. Thomson looked at Mr. Wontus, and that gentleman grew red in the face, but neither uttered a word.

"It was the first sacrifice that I made for the South, sir," continued the lady, without noticing Mr. Wontus, "and when I heard the shouts that greeted the reading of the note, and it was understood that it was a voluntary offering from *me*, I felt proud of myself and my action.

"No time was to be lost or the bird would be gone; but some of the ladies insisted on being in the neighborhood at the time the affair came off, and finally the gentlemen were persuaded to take us along. I was glad to show them that I would and could make a sacrifice.

"The night was clear, and the moon shone down brighter, it seemed to me, than ever it had done before. Our cavalcade was a grand one, numbering some twenty gentlemen, mounted on spirited horses and surrounding the ladies, who rode in the centre of the line. I dared not give myself time to think of what I had done, so listened to the music of the horses' feet, and to the plans to be acted upon when we should reach my own home. Thirty minutes brought us within sight of the house, and here the troop separated, so as to entirely surround the house and prevent escape, leaving a guard of honor with the ladies, with directions to proceed at once to the house and announce our presence."

"Very good plan," said Mr. Wontus, dryly.

"My neighbor-lover was by my side, and as we rode along he so excited me with his remarks concerning my regard for the Yankee that I was ready to do almost anything to convince him, and all the world besides, that I was ready to make almost any sacrifice that might be demanded of me. I so expressed

myself, and, on alighting at my father's door, I was the first to rush in and acquaint Mr. Blakely with the fact that there was no occasion for him to fear, as our young gentlemen only intended to provide him with an appropriate suit of clothes. I shall never forget the look that he gave me as I thus laughingly spoke to him of the ordeal he was about to pass through.

"'You are joking, Catherine,' said he, at length, first looking inquiringly at my father, who sat opposite to him, and then glancing at me. I returned his glance with a look of pride and defiance, and my father said he feared that what I said was true, but remarked that he was surprised that the affair was to take place now; he had thought that he would have had an opportunity of warning him of his danger, thus giving him a chance to get out of the country; he was about to tell him when I entered.

"At first Mr. Blakely's face wore a puzzled, incredulous expression, but as the clatter of hoofs sounded on the sward, and the buzz of suppressed conversation and laughter became more distinct in the stillness of the night, his lips curled with ill-concealed scorn, and his blue eyes sparkled and flashed like living coals; his very body seemed to grow larger.

"'What am I to do?' he asked, rising from his chair, and speaking in his usual mild way, and again he bent his gaze on me.

"As he stood there he looked noble, the perfect embodiment of a true and manly courage, and I felt the hot blood rushing to my temples. I forgot that he was a Yankee; I thought only of his goodness, his gentleness, his affection, and at that moment would have given all I possessed in the world to have had the courage to throw myself upon his heaving bosom and swear anew my undying love and devotion.

"Oh, God!" she continued, after a moment's pause, during which a tear stole into Mr. Wontus's eye, and Tommy drew his chair nearer, "what I suffered at that moment! Until then I never knew what love was; pride had filled its place until the trying moment came, and only then was I able to distinguish the difference between the false and real. I looked into his eyes and read there the mingled love and pain of a true heart, but I lacked the courage to do right, and persisted in forwarding that which my heart whispered was wrong. He stood with one hand upon the table awaiting a reply. Ten

thousand thoughts passed through my head like flashing meteors, but no words rose to my lips.

"'What does this mean?' he cried, as numerous heavy footsteps were heard in the hall. 'Why am I thus treated by a people whom I defy to put a finger on one action in my life other than that which should become an honorable man and a Christian? Would you have me deny what I believe to be right? Have you no respect for an honest difference of opinion——'

"'Damn such opinions! we've had too much of them!' cried an excited voice, interrupting Mr. Blakely, as a number of men entered the room, and ranged themselves in a semi-circle around the table. I looked around, my neighbor-lover was by my side, but not a syllable passed Mr. Blakely's compressed lips. Slowly he elevated his head, and then folding his arms he cast a glance about him, and the momentary silence became oppressive. It was on my lips to appeal for mercy, but fiery eyes were upon me, and I hesitated.

"'What will you have of me, gentlemen?' asked Blakely, without changing his position.

"My father left the room.

"'We want you to leave this country,' said one, whom I recognized as a member of the State Legislature.

"'When?'

"'Now!'

"'There is no train until morning. I will depart with pleasure then; but first tell me, gentlemen, why I am visited in this strange, mysterious, and, I may say, discourteous manner. Have you any reason for it?'

"'Reason?' cried the spokesman, 'reason? aye, thousands, tens of thousands! You are an abolitionist; you would free our niggers, you would murder and plunder the people of the South; you have robbed us for years, you have insulted us in the national halls at Washington. You have wrongfully, and without the consent of the people, elected a man to the presidency. You, or your people, have encouraged our niggers to run away; have hid them from their rightful masters (a murmur ran through the assemblage), and we cannot and will not have it any longer. We are a proud people, a brave and chivalric people, but in this we are united: that come weal or come woe, we will stand by South Carolina and her sisters forever!' A

wild shout rang out upon the air as the gentleman finished. I looked for Mr. Blakely to tremble, but he did not; his face wore the same clear, firm look, and he said,—

"'I voted for Mr. Lincoln, gentlemen, because I believe him to be a pure and honest man, for no other,—but I must deny the other charges. I could prove to you conclusively that you are wrong in most of your conclusions; that you are the instruments of a wily set of unprincipled men, who seek to excite your hatred for the government, that their own selfish ends may be gratified. But this is neither time nor place——'

"He was interrupted by shouts from those on the lawn. 'Fetch him out!' 'Don't listen to the mudsill!' 'Hang the thief!' rang out from every side.

"A movement was made by my neighbor-lover to approach Mr. Blakely, but he stepped back as Blakely seized a stick of wood and addressed himself in a loud, clear voice to those about him.

"'Gentlemen,' he said, backing against the wall, 'I have done you no harm. I have come among you on business, and sooner would I have my right hand fall withered at my side than seek to disturb you by any word or act calculated to excite anger or commotion among your people. I am a peacefully-disposed man, but like other men I have passions which can be aroused, and I assure you, that while I am perfectly willing and ready to do anything in reason that you may ask of me, yet I shall return violence for violence.'

"A wild guffaw greeted his remarks, and one of the men rushed forward, but was deterred from further action by the uplifted stick of wood. How my heart quaked! I admired him more than ever. A whispered conversation now took place among some of the gentlemen, and I was commencing to hope that some pacific measure might be adopted; but in this I was mistaken, for the voices on the lawn became more clamorous and louder. My neighbor-lover looked at me, but my face gave him no encouragement, and then he stepped forward and demanded of Blakely to lay down his weapon. He refused to do it, and then such a scene ensued as I had never witnessed before, and hope I never shall again. Quick as thought three of them closed in with him. I saw his weapon descend like a flash of lightning, and the three men were stretched bleeding on the floor, while the warm blood spurted

in a stream from Mr. Blakely's nose, and a deep crimson gash marked its fearful outlines on his forehead.

"'Have you no respect for ladies?' he cried. But I heard no more: the rest of the gentlemen closed in upon him, the member of the legislature standing off, a passive spectator; the ladies left the room and retired to my chamber, where the exultant shout and boisterous laughter gave us the intelligence that the work was being accomplished."

"Thunderation!" cried Mr. Wontus, excitedly; and then, quickly excusing himself, he begged the woman to go on with her story.

"Some of the ladies who had met Mr. Blakely before made remarks of pity, but so high was the excitement among all classes of people that pity was soon changed to scorn, and the verdict of all was that it served him right. For myself, I was glad when all was over, and when the gentlemen amusingly described how he had looked in his coat of tar and feathers I laughed as loud as the loudest. I inquired how he had acted during the operation, and was informed that he not only fought like a tiger until overpowered, but had made several sore heads, as some of the gentlemen were able to testify from actual experience.

"I inquired as to his whereabouts, and was informed that a portion of the 'committee,' as they styled themselves, had taken him to Montgomery, from whence he would soon be able to reach his home, and where his clothes and effects would find him in the morning.

"Amid the dancing and festivities that followed while the party was awaiting the return of those who had escorted Mr. Blakely into the capital, all was forgotten but the fact that a most commendable act had been performed, and ere the night was spent I was the betrothed of my neighbor-lover, amid the plaudits and congratulations of all the gay assemblage. It was a suitable reward, they all said, for my lover's devotion and activity in the cause. My father expressed himself as pleased with my action, and on the very day—Christmas eve—on which the election for delegates to attend the convention called by Governor Moore to determine the position of Alabama in the coming struggle took place, I became the wife of —of my neighbor-lover."

"Was that your husband's name?" queried Tommy, inno-

cently. Mr. Wontus frowned, and directed Tommy to hold his tongue.

"In the exciting scenes which followed," said the woman, without noticing the interruption, "my husband was a most active participant. The young men were rallying from all quarters of the State, and on the eleventh day of January, when the ordinance of secession was passed by the convention, which commenced its sittings on the seventh, my husband was chosen as a sort of envoy to proceed to this city and consult with the members of Congress as to future action. You know, sir, as well as I do, the public convulsions that followed quickly on the heels of secession. With these came brilliant prospects, and we lived here amid the most charming associations. Gentlemen connected with the government and high in authority were our constant visitors, for my husband was one of the most bitter secessionists, and only played the part of a law-abiding citizen that he might be better enabled to see and know what was going on among the Yankees.

"When Sumter was captured the independence of the South became a fixed fact, and, sir, we shall live, I hope, to see the noble sons of my Southern home triumph over these crowds of Hessians, who are constantly parading through the streets of Washington, to desecrate the soil of Virginia with their Vandal feet."

"Madam," said Mr. Wontus, apologetically, as though he disliked to break in upon the story and yet felt that it was his duty to refute the charge, "I think,—I know you are mistaken. The soldiers of the government are confined to no particular class of society, but come from the ranks of the rich and highborn, as well as from the poor and lowly."

"But let me tell you," continued the invalid without appearing to notice the interruption, "how it comes that you should find me in the condition that I am in at present."

Mr. Wontus begged her to proceed.

"After we had fairly commenced and our communications were cut off, we found it necessary to seek means of support, and my husband accepted a position in one of the departments, where he remained until we were informed, in a manner which I do not care to state, that he had been appointed, by Governor Moore, a major in one of the Alabama regiments, and as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made he left

for the South, to protect his home and fireside. He would have taken me with him, but I felt perfectly easy, and believed that I had better wait here, where I could be of great service in supplying information, until the war has concluded and the South been guaranteed her rights. Not being accustomed to economy, and the birth of my child occurring, I soon consumed all the money I had, and finding it impossible to communicate with my friends in Alabama and procure more, as a last resort I accepted a situation in one of the departments,—for I assure you that until recently there were plenty of dear friends in this city who loved the South,—where I remained until attacked with this terrible fever."

Mr. Wontus said "yes ma'am," and looked puzzled.

"But for my child,"—and the woman cast a loving glance on the sleeping little one in Mr. Wontus's arms,—"I would, woman as I am, dare all the perils of the journey, and follow my husband; I would stand by his side and encourage him to brave and noble deeds!" She paused and raised her hands to her temples. "But no, it is willed otherwise; but if God is good enough to give me once again my health and strength, the name of Flick——"

"Flick, did you say, ma'am?" cried Mr. Wontus, springing to his feet, and almost letting the babe fall from his arms. "Did I understand you to say Flick?—Major Flick?"

"What have I done? What have I said?" cried the invalid, the blood rushing up to her thin, pale cheeks and her whole body trembling with emotion.

"Did I understand you to say Flick?" and Mr. Wontus's manner was that of intense interest. "You have nothing to fear from me, madam; a woman—a lone woman—is always entitled to my respect (the gentleman placed his disengaged hand on those ribs which are supposed to cover and shelter the heart), and more particularly one who is in distress."

It was some time before the lady could overcome her emotions sufficient to inform Mr. Wontus that the name she had accidentally uttered was really the name of her husband, and now that all was known she gave full vent to her pent-up feelings, and, with tears rolling down her cheeks, she implored her hearers not to mention the fact of her husband being in the rebel army. The scene was deeply affecting, so much so in fact, that our hero turned away his head and asked Thomas

Thomson, who was gazing listlessly into the fire, what he was crying about. Tommy might have put the same question to Mr. Wontus with perfect propriety.

Had the lady asked Mr. Wontus to go hang himself it is highly probable that that gentleman would have promised to do it, without ever once considering the consequences. But she did not. All that was asked of him was that he should not tell anybody about her husband being in the rebel army. This he believed he could do without violating any law, human or divine; in fact he was on the point of informing the lady that he knew her husband, and that he believed from her description of him that the gentleman was at that very moment fighting a liquid enemy most bravely, in the City of Brotherly Love.

I say he was about to do this; but he did not, for the command "Halt! Order arms!" and the sharp ring of muskets on the pavement in front of the house attracted his attention.

"Ah! soldiers," said he, gazing out of the window, with the child still in his arms. "Brave fellows!"

The officer in command ascended the steps and rang the bell.

"Coming here!" he exclaimed, and then suddenly recollecting himself, he turned to the lady. "Don't disturb yourself, madam," said he, soothingly, "no harm, I assure you; some mistake;" and tenderly placing the child on the bed by the side of its mother, Mr. Wontus walked down-stairs to his own apartments, followed by Mr. Thomson.

"First floor, front," said the landlady, as if answering an inquiry; and this was followed by heavy footsteps on the stairs.

"Throw open the door, wide," cried Mr. Wontus, to his servant, rubbing his hands with delight. "I have longed to see these brave fellows, and now some most lucky mistake brings them right to my very arms."

An officer and a sergeant stood on the threshold.

"Mr. Wontus?" queried the officer.

"My name, sir," said Mr. Wontus; "walk in, sir. I am happy to see you;" and he bustled about and, with the assistance of Tommy, placed a decanter and glasses on the table. "Come in, gentlemen, come in." The officer and soldier walked in, and were about to explain the object of their visit, but Mr. Wontus would hear nothing until they had partaken of his

hospitality. This done, Mr. Wontus insisted on his visitors being seated, but they declined.

"We have an unpleasant duty to perform, sir," said the officer, after a little hesitation.

"Yes, yes," cried Mr. Wontus, his eyes speaking the pleasure he felt. "It's your business—necessary, gentlemen, necessary!" and he threw himself back in his chair as though he had done a wonderful deed.

"You are Mr. Wontus?"

"I am."

"I arrest you."

For a moment Mr. Wontus sat in speechless astonishment, and Thomas Thomson looked as though he would like to be somewhere else. The scene was distressing; the look of joy had given place to one of deep distress.

"Good joke, good joke!" said Mr. Wontus, recovering himself after a time, and laughing heartily.

"Excuse me, sir," said the officer, "but my time is precious; you will please make yourself ready to accompany this man;" and then turning to the sergeant he gave him directions to convey Mr. Wontus to the provost-marshal's office, and without further ceremony left the room.

"Come," said the sergeant.

"Me?" asked Mr. Wontus, his mouth opening with wonder.

"Yes."

"Mistake," said Thomas Thomson, laconically.

"No talk, or I'll take you," said the sergeant, casting a depreciating glance on Tommy.

Mr. Thomson was silent from that moment, and his master was so completely overwhelmed with the condition in which he found himself that he sat like a man who had suddenly lost his senses.

"Come up here, a couple of you," cried the sergeant from the window, to the men below.

"There *must* be some mistake," cried Mr. Wontus, recovering himself.

"Don't know," said the sergeant; "it's none of *my* business."

A happy thought struck Mr. Wontus: "What am I charged with, and where is your authority?"

"I don't know anything about the charge; here's my authority," and the soldier tapped his musket with his knuckles.

Mr. Wontus now endeavored to persuade the sergeant that it was all a mistake; that he wasn't the man; that there must be another man by his name. Then he fell to coaxing and pleading, but the sergeant was inexorable.

Then Mr. Wontus pointed to his foot and declared that he could not walk—that he could not go—it was impossible!

To all of this the sergeant only smiled incredulously, and informed Mr. Wontus that if he was not ready to go with him of his own free will and accord, the soldiers would carry him; and preparations were being made for that important event, by some of the men taking off their belts, when Mr. Wontus concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, and prepared to accompany the sergeant and party.

CHAPTER X.

INTRODUCES MR. NIDD AS A CRITIC, AND COMMENTS ON SUNDRY PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

THE good news from the Southern and Western departments; the bold and uncompromising stand of the new Secretary of War, the probabilities of an early movement of the Grand Army of the Potomac, under the leadership of McClellan, gave to the nation a new lease on life, in the spring of 1862. Up to this time leniency, and an evident desire to look over all that it conveniently could, had been the policy of the government. That it was a mistaken one, certainly none who remember those days will hesitate to say. But the idea seemed to be prevalent in official circles that the "uprising" would be over in a little while, and then all the sorrows and heart-burnings that might be engendered would be palliated and rendered more easily healed. But now the condition of affairs commenced to change, and while the same leniency was practiced, so far as possible, among the military authorities in the field, yet a different path was opened up in the cities in the States not in rebellion. The leniency of the government had been mistaken for fear by the enemies of the Union, and treason raised her bloody hand fearlessly, in the very streets

of the capital of the nation. Now for the first time the authorities undertook the delicate task of dealing with that despicable class who, while lacking the manly courage to be open foes, did their worst in a secret, stealthy manner, to paralyze the government by sowing seeds of discord among the ignorant, and stabbing at the vitals of the army by giving information to the enemy, and thus thwarting every effort to bring about an early settlement of the difficulties. The country had been so long in peace, and the people had become so thoroughly accustomed to obey the law, that those in high places who sought to do damage sheltered themselves behind the *habeas corpus*, and defied the power of the nation. Treason had almost become popular, and yet the government stood inactive. But a brighter day was dawning, and the bold stand taken by some of the military authorities in the Southern departments was quickly followed by the arrest and incarceration of the men in the North who were doing greater damage to the cause than the battles of the armed hosts of the South.

It was unfortunate that Mr. Wontus went to Washington. It was unfortunate weather. It was unfortunate that he should be laid up after getting to Washington. It was unfortunate that he should fall in love with a voice. It was unfortunate that his kindly nature should induce him to spend so long a time with a sick lady. But it was particularly unfortunate that his brief pleasure should have such a quick and startling termination. So it was, however, and none of the other members of the club, if I may except Mr. Thomas Thomson, had partaken of any of these unfortunate mishaps. On the contrary, Messrs. Nidd and Wilkins had been from the very outset in the very best of spirits: the latter gentleman, in fact, was fairly steeped in spirits most of his time; for, as a natural consequence, he had made himself an indispensable guest among the soldiers who thronged the city at the time, and no man could have made himself more at home than did Mr. Wilkins among the men who had learned, or were then learning, to look on to-morrow as a myth.

The avenue, with its myriad of hotels of high and low degree, was his constant promenade, and there Mr. Nidd would leave him in the morning; but it was not in the province of

man to tell where he could be found in the evening. As for Mr. Nidd, that gentleman's habits had undergone very little change, and when he left his lodgings in the morning he could be looked for, with the same regularity that we look for the sun, in his seat in the gallery of the House, a little to the right above the clock, and directly opposite to the Speaker. For once the feeling of patriotism and love of country was paramount to that of greed and gain, and the members made the proceedings of that deliberative body more interesting and exciting than they usually are or were. It was fine entertainment for Mr. Nidd, and, in fact, for every one else except the reporters; and there he sat hour after hour, and wondered, as many had done before and many will continue to do, that the halo of glory which had surrounded so many men, as he had read of them in New York, should fade away so quickly and become so commonplace and tiresome on a nearer view. Where were all the magnificent heads and wise-looking faces? No answer was vouchsafed; but before him were men who looked and acted just as he saw men look and act at home, and he concluded at length that either the members were of less mental calibre than he had been taught to believe they were, or he himself was not up to that standard of judgment which allows a man to discriminate correctly between the ring of the true and false metal. As but few men are ever ready to condemn their own judgment, Gascon Nidd pronounced the House wanting in—what some people would be inclined to consider very requisite—brains, and from that moment he enjoyed the proceedings the same as he would a comedy on the stage.

On a fly-leaf of Mr. Nidd's memorandum book I find the following notes, which I take the liberty of reproducing, although they were evidently not intended for publication:

House, Wednesday.—Little man; bald head; damn fool; talks all the time; mouth full of pebbles; nobody listens but big man with glasses. Shameful waste of time. Little man wants something; nobody knows or seems to care what; big man don't want him to have it; little man red in face; friend tells him not to bust. Big man says it isn't constitutional; little man wants to be heard, for the great love he's got for the government; big man with glasses says *your*

love (laugh), and shakes his fist at the Speaker, and that gentleman hammers on a stone with his mallet, and says, "Favor, aye! Contrary, no!" Nobody hears him, and he says, "Ayes have it," and *that* matter is settled. Clerk says, "*Be it enacted, and so forth,*" and sits down. Mr. Blinkum says he hopes the bill will pass. Mr. Slasher says he can't see it. Blinkum hopes he won't object, but Slasher *does* object, and calls all the other members' attention to the fact that he does object. The other members pay attention to him by going into the cloak-room, or by reading the newspapers in their seats. Mr. Blinkum says Slasher wants to clog the wheels of legislation; that his bill is harmless in a general sense, and of great benefit in a particular sense, and ought to receive the vote of every patriot; refers to American eagle, loved banner of the free, etc. Mr. Slasher asks that the bill be read again (cries of "Oh!"). Mr. Slasher insists. Clerk reads: "*Be it enacted, and so forth,*" and gentleman whispers in Mr. Slasher's ear, and he becomes enlightened; will withdraw his objection. Speaker says, "Favor, aye! Contrary, no!" Mr. Blinkum voted aye. Somebody wants the ayes and nays. Clerk calls the roll, and members say aye and no, and then look surprised. All done. Speaker says, "61 ayes, 52 nays." Member stands up in his seat (wants to vote on the strong side). Speaker says, "The gentleman from ———! were you within the bar of the House when the roll was called?" The gentleman from ——— says "Aye," and sits down. Motion to adjourn. Adjourned. Business of to-day's session: two bills passed, neither of which are known or understood by anybody except Mr. Blinkum and the little man with the bald head.

Saw my representative,—member from my district. Very sociable, clever fellow, before the election; spoke to me a score of times every day. Met him in lobby this afternoon; said "How de-do, Sam?" Didn't know me; asked him if he didn't remember me; guessed maybe he had seen me somewhere, but couldn't recollect; head so full of important government business wouldn't hardly know his own children. Knew another man who keeps a tavern; talked to *him* for an hour; shook hands, and was much pained at parting; very strange. A thought strikes me. I'll write it down: "*Circumstances alter cases!*"

Further on in Mr. Nidd's memorandum book are found the following reflections on that high judicial institution, the Supreme Court:

Supreme Court.—Thursday. Law is a great thing; it is justice blindfolded, with the privilege of looking a little out of one eye, to see that in dealing out the commodity, law, it don't allow too many grains of common sense to creep in, and thereby make things easily understood by those who have occasion to deal in the article. Lawyers are the spirits of justice, made manifest in the flesh, and are dispensers of mysterious terms and long speeches. They are also collectors of high tariff prices from all who have occasion to sail into their port, either through ignorance, misfortune, or choice; and are not notoriously sensitive on any subject except fees. That their calling is most praiseworthy and respectable none can deny (or if they could, would dare to), for they not only insist on its high position among the trades of the land, but they insist on compelling everybody else to do the same. They are up to all sorts of roguery; their business is to be true to their own interests, and as their interests are commensurate with their success in getting their fellow-men into and out of trouble, they are generally prepared to stand up and proclaim for either side. But there are exceptions to most rules, and there may be exceptions to those gentlemen who stand in the shadow of Miss Justice, and prevent that much-abused blind young woman from bestowing her favors promiscuously about among her gentlemen in waiting. Young woman aforesaid being perfectly blind, except as previously noted, the attorneys don't hesitate to indulge in sundry gymnastic performances in her presence which would certainly make her blush if she saw them; but she can't, for she's blind, stone blind,—not by nature, but on principle. Besides the terrible affliction of being blind, she is also deaf; leastwise, it is our duty to believe that she is, because it invariably becomes necessary for her courtiers to shout at the top of their voices, whenever they plead before her for the salvation or damnation of a creature who seeks her protection. I'd alter all this if I could, but I can't! Time has sanctioned the practice, and while I acknowledge the almost gross impropriety of my speaking of a business which has assisted me thus far through life, yet there are many things about it that ought to be condemned, and I

regard it as just that the condemnation should come from among its own practitioners.

[This paper shall be consumed by fire, for should it become known that I had written such things I would be condemned and severely criticised by every lawyer in the land. "Self-preservation is the first law of nature."—G. N.]

Six men, whose heads have been frosted by the hand of time, sitting behind a high desk, which stands on an elevated platform, directly in front of me, as I look in the door. Four vacant chairs behind the desk; whole number of chairs, occupied and unoccupied, ten. Everything clean and neat; but solemn old gentlemen behind the desk look like epicurean preachers, dressed in black bags, and look solemnly uncomfortable; doze occasionally, nod habitually, and look very wise. Squire McFinegan's office on the Bowery surpasses it. And here is where constitutional law is laid down and held up! Well, what have looks to do with things? Nothing; else many men would be put down for what they are not.

A gentleman in black, with a long neck and high shirt-collar, wants to address the bench. Why a *bench?* There is nothing like a bench among the chairs that the black bags sit on, or about the desk, and yet they are "on the bench." As a semi-member of the legal profession, I have never been able to see why justice was always supposed to be incorporated in men who sat on benches, rather than those who sat anywhere else. But the gentleman in black says there is a *hiatus, maximé defendus* somewhere, and then proceeds to state, in a very impressive and exciting manner, that the results of sundry surveys establish certain parallels, and that these certain parallels prove most conclusively that his client owns some hundreds of miles of territory, which somebody else is endeavoring to take away from him; and all the black bags look at each other and nod their heads. Another gentleman in front of the desk, who looks as though he had been living on a diet of terrapin, lobster, oysters, and brandy for a greater part of his life, tells the honorable bags that he is on the side of right and justice, and only wants to *leoni esurienti ex ore exsculpere prædam*, and further than that, that sundry surveys, establishing certain parallels, certainly prove nothing, as such parallels never existed, and never could exist, unless the continent was turned the other end up. The whole affair was certainly nothing more than a deep-laid

plan to steal from his clients—a most honest, self-sacrificing, and deserving corporation of gentlemen—the lands which had belonged to their forefathers at the very moment that Christopher Columbus discovered the continent. He summed up his case, and made it so clear that any honest man would have decided in his favor; but then the man in black got up, and when he was through the case, was (and I never like to give an opinion), to say the least, doubtful. The honorable black bags woke up by and by, whispered together, said there were still some points in doubt; case would be continued next month. Man in black and the man who looks as if he had lived on a lobster diet adjourned to a tavern and refreshed, the same as if they had never said but the most harmless word of each other. Conclude that Washington is a great place, and that my education has been a little neglected.

Here this rather extraordinary and singular commentary ends; and nowhere through all the pages of the book can a word be found which refers to anything else in the great city of Washington.

The order from the President, dated January 27, 1862, which commanded an early movement of the army then lying in front of Washington, and which held the Secretaries of War and Navy, and those in command under them, to a strict accountability, sent a thrill of pleasure to every loyal heart in the land. The defeat at Bull Run, and the almost countless other defeats of minor importance that followed it, were made the springs from which great rejoicing flowed throughout the South, and the chivalric sons of chivalric sires laughed with scorn at the "mudsills" who had come, and were coming, to "manure the land of the South with their carcasses." A great dark cloud hung heavily over the North, East, and West, which the President tried to dispel, but was thwarted at every turn by the hand of "military science," until patience ceased to be a virtue, and then came an order to accomplish that which he had tried for months to secure through patient waiting and kind words. As if by magic, the foreboding cloud which had shadowed the loyal States like a pall rolled gradually back, until once more the bright sun shone forth and put new life into brave hearts, and bid them go forth with new energy. Up to this time the army had been

recruited mainly from among the young unmarried men, but now the firm stand of the government gave recruiting a new stimulus, and it once more became really fashionable and creditable. Married men, whose age did not exclude them, now came forward, and men who were beyond the legal standard in years stood by and cheered the departing ones with loving promises and hopeful wishes. The fires on the altars of patriotism were re-lighted, and the flame burned bright and clear.

The enemy had evacuated Manassas, and were—we scarcely knew where. "On to Richmond!" heralded the newspapers. "Be patient," said the President. "Be patient," echoed the people. "More troops," cried McClellan. More came, and every day the people heard the plaintive cry, "All quiet on the Potomac."

I am not a philosopher, nor do I often indulge in panegyrics, yet I am sure that those who happen to read these pages years from now (for I shall leave them where they can be found) will pardon me if I speak a few words in regard to an individual whose name is now familiar to the civilized world. I am handling the affairs that transpire under my own individual eye, hence I risk being called fulsome when I say that General McClellan is a model soldier; perhaps he is too much model. I saw him yesterday, as he passed down the avenue with his staff, and I loved him. Why or wherefore, I'm sure I cannot tell, unless love is contagious, and I have been inoculated by the troops under his command. That *they* love him, that the people of the whole country north of the Potomac love him, none dare gainsay. Like yonder bright star that peeps in at my window as I write, he is fixed in the country's firmament, and we look to him to guide us through the storms and vicissitudes of an eventful epoch. If you doubt the truth of these lines, listen to the clang and clatter and the wild huzzas that greet his unheralded appearance among the boys in blue, who fringe the horizon on yonder hill. Why this should all be I cannot tell, and yet it is! To speak ill of this man I dare not if I would; his friends number like the blades of grass, and yet who knows what may be his destiny. Public favor is but a flitting courtier at best, and he who basks in its sunshine to-day may be stricken by its thunder on the morrow.

How well he sits his horse—a noble-looking man indeed.

How wondrous clever, too; see how he lifts his hat and smiles on those rugged-faced fellows who are tossing their caps in his face, in their wild delirium of love. Can this ever change? Can that eye which now flashes with just pride before the homage of a whole people shed a tear because it is so? Aye! But dare I say so in public? I opine not, lest my head pay the forfeit of so bold a sentence; and yet the time may come when men on all sides shall be ready to say, "I told you so!" But enough of this; before I close this chapter I have a word to record concerning Mr. Benjamin Wilkins.

Among the thousands of strangers, both civil and military, who crowded the capital while the army lay encamped there, were hundreds of spirits congenial to Mr. Wilkins, as well as others who were less experienced in the ways of the world. With the first Mr. Wilkins associated and spent the money which he was so fortunate as to draw in divers ways from the second. His everyday life was one of continuous sunshine, and he found himself in so rich a pasturage that his whole being seemed to be instilled with a new spirit, which nothing short of death itself could put an end to. He manifested the most profound wordy interest for the members of the corps while he was in their presence, but the moment the door closed upon his back in the morning his interest in them ceased, and until necessity brought him again in contact with them, no such beings consumed oxygen on earth.

The brief time he had spent in Washington had been taken advantage of, and served to render him a living walking encyclopedia of places, events, men, and things in general. That such a man as this should be a most valuable addition to the institutions of any city, no argument is necessary to prove,—that he should be really indispensable in a city like Washington, all men will readily concede.

I cannot undertake to describe the self-sacrificing magnanimity of Mr. Wilkins, as he walked through the hotels and volunteered his services to all whom chance threw in his way. That he should talk of Seward, Stanton, and the other cabinet officers as familiarly as he would of his most intimate acquaintances, will not surprise any who remember his buoyant disposition.

"Stanton's a fine fellow," he would say, with that impressive *sang-froid* that carries instant conviction to unsophisticated

minds. "In fact, he's one of the best men I know. A little cross and determined sometimes, when he don't know a man, but taken on the whole, a mighty fine feller when you're acquainted. Reminds me of my old friend Gladstone: severe on duty, but kind and gentle as a kitten among friends." He handled the generals of the army and the officers of the navy in the same easy, familiar, matter-of-fact way, and was ready at any moment to enter into an argument that the Capitol building could not compare with the Coliseum, or the White House with the Tuileries. Since Mr. Wilkins never vouchsafed the information (and it is believed that no other human being ever could), where he picked up his knowledge of men and places I am certainly at a loss to determine; but I have always suspected, from the strangeness of some of his similes, that he had been an attentive listener at some period of his life, and that what he had heard became so vividly impressed upon his susceptible mind, that what first found a place in his brain as a picture of fancy soon became impressed as a fact; that once having taken place he believed it, and was ever ready to retail it to patient listeners as a part and parcel of his own individual experience. That such a man found ample opportunity to gratify his peculiarities in the city of Washington during the early days of the war, is natural to suppose. Could Benjamin Wilkins fail to do so? No!

CHAPTER XI.

INTRODUCES MR. NIDD TO THE PRESIDENT, AND PLACES BENJAMIN WILKINS BEFORE THE READER AS A STORY-TELLER.

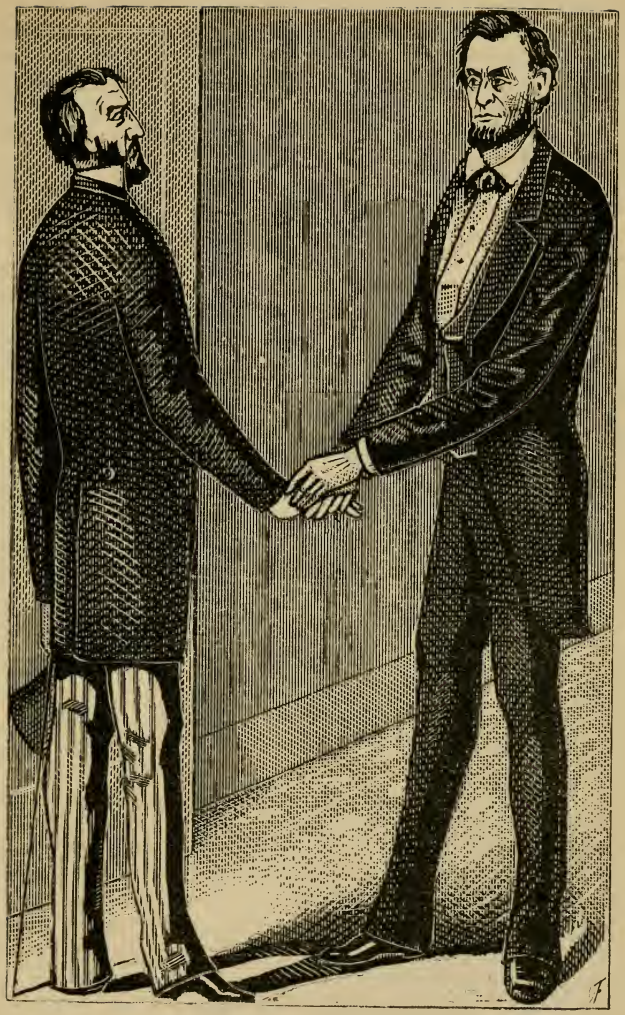
On the day on which Mr. Wontus had had his labor of love so ruthlessly interfered with by the military authorities, Gascon Nidd had devoted himself to an inspection of the treasury building, and at the very moment that the chief of the corps was being dragged through the streets to the inhospitable quarters of the provost-marshal, he was deeply absorbed in the study of the manipulations which the new paper money of the

country was being put through by the deft hands of women. Now I have said, or implied, that Mr. Nidd was interested in the *work*. Well, perhaps he was, but even the casual observer could not fail to notice that while it was true that he did cast occasional glances at the piles of money which he saw lying about, yet his eyes, at times, remained so long fixed on some one of the cheerful intelligent faces that confronted him, that one would be inclined to imagine that all that absorbing love for money, which is supposed to fill the heart of all men, had given place to a love for something else, and that something else was the new officials, who had been so recently introduced to these departments of the government, and who (I blush to use the term) wore petticoats.

It is highly probable that Mr. Nidd would have indulged in a few flattering remarks with these officials, if not in overtures of love and affection, for in that direction he was seriously weak, had it not been for two reasons: the one, non-intercourse was a rule of the department; the other was that Mr. Nidd's form did not appear to strike anybody as the form of a member of Congress, hence he received nothing but furtive glances, such as would be cast on any other stranger. He had expected more than this, and as he was a man of gumption as well as discernment, he cast a scornful look about him and swung himself majestically around on his heel, and then swung himself with quick nervous strides out of the building.

Mr. Nidd congratulated himself on finding himself on the steps looking toward the President's mansion, for it was more by chance than good management that he found his way through the halls, and came out through the very door that he most desired. As he stood on the steps and wiped the moisture from his brow, he suffered his eye to take what might be called a desultory view of the landscape spread before him. In the foreground stood the White House,—called *white*, I presume, because it is generally nearer a cream color than anything else, —and stretching off gracefully and gradually toward the river, which sparkled in the distance, were the grounds, which Mr. Nidd supposed were a common, but which are really the President's pleasure grounds.

As Mr. Nidd stood on the treasury steps, his very soul expanded with the magnitude of everything that surrounded him. Passing his eyes over the green-houses contiguous to, and in



"'NO FAVORS OF ANY KIND TO ASK?'"

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the rear of, the White House, he allowed them to roam among the trees on what he believed to be the common, and finally rest on the miniature mountains. He was not of a poetic nature, but he felt that he was incapable of doing justice to the scene in prose. His mind wandered back to his childhood days,—for he had been born in the country,—and, tragically extending his hand, his face wearing a look of serene happiness, he said:

> "How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour,
> And gather honey all the day
> From every opening flower."

[There can be no particular reason assigned for the rather singular quotation which Mr. Nidd used on this occasion; nor can anything be said in praise of its appropriateness. But it was poetry, and, like many others who make use of the Muses on similar occasions, he furnished the material without regard to the matter.]

"Ah!" ejaculated the gentleman, as a smile of satisfaction flitted across his placid face, "nothing like beautiful nature to bring out the fine points in a man's composition." And, following this, Mr. Nidd permitted his fancy to play upon the scene before him until his usually methodical mind was a perfect picture-gallery, wherein mountains, valleys, rivers, and cascades figured most extensively. Absence from the cares of business was having its effect on the austere conveyancer; and it was not until he had personally inspected the miniature mountains, and found them to be piles of ashes, stones, and garbage of different kinds, that his mind came back to its accustomed train of thought, and he wondered that he should ever have wandered from the beaten path. In this frame of mind his attention was called to that magnificent pile of marble which stands on the banks of the canal (an imported feature of Venetian grandeur), and which may one day present a most imposing appearance from the other side of the river. In this case distance did not lend enchantment to the view, and as Mr. Nidd saw it for the first time, he came very near permitting himself to believe that it was the remains of a chimney which one day had played an important part in the manufactures (if there ever were any) of Washington. I say that he came very near permitting himself to believe that this was the

case, and probably would have believed it, had it not been that the diagram which he carried in his pocket informed him that it was the Washington Monument. The moment this information found a place in the mind of the gazer, that moment the smoke-stack of a moment before became a venerated, not to say beautiful, pile, and he fell into a reflective mood.

He had seated himself on the remains of a cart, which constituted one of the ornaments of the grounds; and as he sat there he kept nodding his head like a man who is perfectly satisfied with his thoughts, and his face was as solemn-looking as a grave-yard in winter. Exactly what passed through his mind as he sat there can only be a matter of conjecture, for only that which found vent in expression finds a place here.

"So that's Washington's Monument!" soliloquized he, and then he went nodding his head as before. "Great man,—one among ten thousand. What! yes, one among all the men in the world,—got his equal nowhere, and never had. Talk of your Acestes, your Chiron, your Itonus, your Belus, your Alexanders, your Napoleons, your Brutuses, and all the rest, not one of them all who could, would, or did equal him. Look at him," continued Mr. Nidd, pointing with his finger in the direction of the monument, and speaking with animation; "he was brave, he was good; he sought no power, and only accepted it when it was forced on him. Did he look out for himself? Not once! The country he had helped to establish was his only care, and he worked for her happiness, her glory, her prosperity, and renown only! He was worshiped by the people. Could he have made himself king? I'll bet you he could! Did he? I'll bet you he didn't! And there's where he stands, a head and shoulder above all the heroes the world has ever seen, for not one of them would have cast the crown away if he ever once got his hands on it. Argue as you please, it's a fact."

Having delivered himself as though he was addressing an individual, the speaker once more fell to nodding his head. Again he speaks:

"So that's Washington's Monument! Well, I'm glad to hear it; but it's an infernal shame to let it stand there looking like a cross between a chimney and a dilapidated light-house. Who's a-building it? I don't know; it's been so long since I heard of it that I've forgotten. Not the gov-

ernment? No! It would not be becoming in a government like ours to erect a pile like that, even to Washington. It would make an aristocracy of family, and heaven knows we're drifting into that silliness fast enough as it is. (A pause.) Yes, I remember; the citizens of the States were to build this monument. (A long pause.) Will that time ever come again? My poor, unhappy country! what have you done to be thus dismembered, thus torn and bled? I pray for the early pacification of the troubled waters. Our nation is too great, our future too brilliant, to allow of any such rupture. Stand by the flag, boys!" And Mr. Nidd rose to his feet and fairly shouted the peroration; and then, looking around him, he bit his lips with evident vexation, said the words "I'm a fool!" quite audibly, and retraced his steps to the avenue.

Gascon Nidd was not only a democrat in the literal sense of the term, but he was also one politically. He never knew exactly *why* he was a Democrat, since he had little or nothing to do with politics or politicians, but, having polled his first vote on that side, he continued in that faith, always feeling assured in his own mind that there wasn't much choice between the two great parties, so far as the real administration of affairs was concerned. He lived as happily under one as he did under the other. He had not voted for Abraham Lincoln; in fact, to the best of his knowledge and belief, that gentleman was not the sort of man who ought to be President, but now that it was within his power he thought he would call on the President, just to see how he looked.

It is presumable that no man who ever occupied the presidential chair had more, if as many, personal interviews with the people of this country, than had President Lincoln. Nor were his interviews confined to any particular kind or class of people, but to all. The intensely exciting times, and the momentous issues involved, together with the regular business of his office, brought him in contact with many people; but aside from that, the droll stories, his quaint sayings, and, above all, his goodness of heart, had made for him a reputation which time cannot efface, and created a curiosity on the part of the people of the country which no man who visited the capital neglected to gratify if in his power.

It was simply a matter of curiosity on the part of Mr. Nidd when that gentleman determined to pay the President a

visit, and, as he passed under the rather primitive—not to use a harsher term—portico, he felt an unconquerable disregard for men and things pass through his system.

"Your business, sir?" asked a man, the moment Mr. Nidd set his foot inside the doors.

"What's that to you?" asked Mr. Nidd.

"Do you wish to see the President?" continued the man, without noticing Mr. Nidd's manner.

"I do!"

"I am very sorry, sir; but it is after visiting hours, and none save members of Congress, heads of departments, are admitted. Have you any important business with the President?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Nidd, taking a survey of the room, and assuming a dignified mien; "I want to see this man they call the President. I am a sovereign,—one of the men who make presidents, members of Congress, heads of departments, and the like; what more do you want?"

As Mr. Nidd spoke, a tall, gaunt, sorrowful-looking man came slowly down the stairs, and stood leaning against the wall. His face wore an abstracted appearance, but as Mr. Nidd progressed, a smile wreathed his mouth, and for a moment his kindly eye was lighted by a radiant look, and ere the door-keeper had an opportunity to reply, he approached the visitor and announced himself to be the President.

"Glad to see you, sir," said Mr. Nidd, extending his hand with the same familiarity that he would have greeted an old friend.

Mr. Lincoln took his visitor's hand in both of his, and looking into his face, asked:

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Nothing."

"No advice to give me?"

"No."

"Desire no contract?"

"No."

"An office?"

"No."

"A pass to go beyond the lines?"

"No, sir."

"No politician?"

"No."

"No favors of any kind to ask?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Nidd, decisively; "I came to see *you;* having seen you, I'll go."

The President still held his visitor's hand in his, and stood thoughtfully gazing into vacancy. "No advice," he muttered, as though speaking to himself; "no contract; no pass; no politician. No favors of any kind! My friend, you are welcome." And looking into Mr. Nidd's eyes, he shook his hand warmly and drew him to a seat. The heavy, earnest look on the President's face gave way to a more cheerful cast, as he seated himself by Mr. Nidd and commenced conversation.

"And is it really true that you do not desire a favor of any kind at my hands?" asked Mr. Lincoln. "It has been so long since I saw a man, or woman, who did not want some office, contract, or favor of some description or other, that I am at a loss to understand a man who calls on me out of pure, unselfish friendship."

Mr. Nidd was about to explain his visit, for so kind and generous did the President appear that he commenced to feel uncomfortable.

"Are you sure there is nothing that I can do for you?" asked the President, rising; "I should be glad to talk with you longer, but I have an engagement with the Secretary of State, and was about to attend to it when I was arrested by your conversation with the door-keeper."

"You can do something," said Mr. Nidd, rising, and speaking with some emotion.

"Ah!"

"Yes; be brave, be true, be faithful, and bring this most terrible war to an end as soon as possible."

"My friend," said the President, turning to Mr. Nidd and laying his hand on that gentleman's shoulder, his face again assuming its cast of mingled determination and sadness, "with the help of Him who reigns on high, all these things will I be, and more, if He wills it! Good-by, sir." And Mr. Lincoln spoke with such impressive fervency that even the skeptical Nidd felt that he had been wrong in condemning the man before he knew him.

It was not until after Mr. Nidd had been left alone that he came to properly comprehend what he had done. Without knowing it, or rather without appreciating the fact, he

had been talking in the most commonplace manner to a man whom, if he had occupied a relative position anywhere else in the world, he would have approached with fear and trepidation. But he had been taught to think ill not only of Mr. Lincoln's ability, but of his aims and intentions, and this was the only reason that he could assign for his unceremonious conduct. When he entered the White House he had a supreme disregard for the man, which now was changed into the most profound respect and veneration.

"And they say we Democrats don't love the Union. Well, well, we shall see. That man loves the Union; he is a Democrat by nature, and I love him." Thus Mr. Nidd soliloquized as he passed down the graveled walk, and thence into the avenue. Once in the street, his attention was completely absorbed in his own thoughts, and it was only when he was about passing Willard's that it was attracted elsewhere.

At this time the hotel known as Willard's was the centre of Washington life. Here the politicians, who thirsted for office and its emoluments, were congregated; here the officers of the army made their appointments; and here the sight-seeing strangers, and others, whose business was as mysterious as themselves, assembled; some to see their friends, others to seek the aid of some man of influence, others to hear the news of the day, and still more who came to prey on the innocent and unsuspecting. From early morning until late at night—in fact, it was never ceasing—crowds of men were here to be found, all engaged in the same occupation, talking. In fact, talking in all its different styles, from the loud and commanding to the supplicating whisper, was to be heard on all sides. I sometimes think that from the earnestness which some of these men threw into the conversation, their very lives must depend upon it. There was every shade of the masculine gender of the human family to be seen here at a glance, and poverty walked side by side with the richest. Like the grave, the saloons of Willard's were the great levelers of man: the high and low, who were strangers, found a common footing and a common welcome.

It was the first time that Mr. Nidd had ever paid a visit to this celebrated locality, and it was not without trouble that he managed to effect an entrance to that portion of the hotel called the bar-room. Once here, he took a survey of his surroundings,

and among the first faces that he saw was that of Mr. Benjamin Wilkins, of the Wontus Corps of Observation.

It cannot be said that Mr. Nidd was astonished to find Mr. Wilkins here, because there were few things that that gentleman could or did do that surprised his fellow-members; but that he was a little taken aback, so to speak, there was no question. Mr. Wilkins had failed to notice the arrival of Mr. Nidd, and at the very moment that Mr. Nidd first saw him he was indulging in a few deprecatory remarks, which, I believe, are customary on such occasions, over the last bottle of champagne which he had so generously assisted to consume. He was the centre of a group of gentlemen, who occupied the distant corner of the bar, some of whom were military men, and others were men whom Mr. Nidd recognized as members of one of the houses of Congress, but whether of the first, second, or third house, he was unable at that moment to determine. The third house of Congress is composed of an unlimited number of members, and resembles the other two houses in only one thing, viz., the persistency with which it hangs to a matter or question after having once become interested in it. A great number of its members are lawyers from different sections of the country, and they are presumed to be very useful adjuncts when it becomes necessary to pass what is called a private bill. They do not receive stipulated salaries, like the members of the other two houses, nor do they have seats, except in the neighboring hotels. They are as well known about the Capitol as the members of either of the other houses, and are infinitely better than a great many who figure in the published proceedings. Besides, they are somewhat of a privileged class, and their offices are behind the pillars which support or ornament different portions of the building, or in the alcoves and niches, which afford a convenient standing-place. In brief, they are not very choice as to exactly *where* they transact their business, and not unfrequently have been known to make use of the cellar. They are, in short, a very large element in the mysteries of Washington. But again I digress.

The party, of which Mr. Wilkins was one, were arguing on that staple subject, the "conduct of the war." In this conversation the military gentlemen, strange as it may seem, appeared to take but little part; but that fact did not seem to make any particular breach in the line of argument, for the

other gentlemen had so many opinions, and were so careful to set them forth in so clear a manner, that the fire of conversation was continuous. But everything must have an end; and although Mr. Wilkins was encouraged in his suggestions as to the proper mode of conquering the enemy in the briefest imaginable time, and was also indefatigable in his efforts to agree with all the opinions and suggestions of the other gentlemen, yet the conversation gradually, and I may say gracefully, changed in some unaccountable manner from war to ghosts. Ghosts are prolific of conversation, which may or may not become prolix; it depends on the early education or associations of those who indulge in the luxury of a vivid imagination.

The gentlemen having become fatigued standing at the bar, one of the members proposed taking a seat, and as the bar-room was not provided with that convenience, they passed out, closely followed by Mr. Nidd. The reading- and sitting-rooms were all full to overflowing, but a friendly stack of trunks, near the clerk's desk, offered a perch, and on these the gentlemen congregated.

It was some time before Mr. Wilkins could gain the undivided attention of his hearers, but he finally succeeded, prefacing his remarks with sundry rather complex questions in regard to ghosts that need not be related here, and said:

"I was born in Jersey,—not the island of that name, but the State. I have traveled in every section of the globe, and know things when I see 'em, without askin' a question. I am not in the habit of relatin' what most people choose to call stories, but there are some facts,—and facts, you know, are stranger than fiction, after all,—occurrences in my own life, which I do not mind relatin' when I meet with clever gentlemen like yourselves."

At this juncture the gentleman jumped down from his perch, and inclined his head in an attitude of the deepest respect. Having placed his cane under his arm, and eased his shirt-collar by running his fingers about his neck, he continued:

"Adjoining my father's plantation was that of Gascon Nidd, Esquire, of New York (Mr. Nidd drew nearer), a man of almost boundless wealth, but whose heart, I am sorry to say, was as cold and flinty as a stone. Perhaps you've heard of

him; but no matter. Nidd was the father of a most interesting family, consistin' of two girls—lovely creatures—and a boy. Imogene, the oldest of the girls, resembled her father in every respect, except in disposition, and I have said that his was cold; hers was as warm and genial as the sun of an Italian sky. She was tall and graceful; her complexion was neither a blonde nor a brunette, but was a charmin' hit betwixt the two. Her hair—such hair!—was as brown as a chestnut, and fell in graceful confusion over a noble forehead and alabaster shoulders. Her eyes were brown, a beautiful brown, I think,—resembled mine a little, I always thought,—and swam, as it was, in liquid glory. Gentlemen, I loved that girl!"

"So it is to be presumed," said the Hon. Mr. Leatherhead.

"But what of the ghost?"

"Oh, yes; pardon me,—I had almost forgot. Let me see." And Mr. Wilkins at once fell into a contemplative attitude. "I think it was in June. I had never declared my love to Imogene, nor yet she to me; but no matter. Old Nidd, her father, was a violent man; but, gentlemen, it takes more than words to frighten me, and while he often tried to scare me with his talk, I still went on, a little clandestinely, but I went. Nidd's field joined ours, and for short I used to cut across the fields on evenin's when I was returnin' home. One night I met the old man near the woods. Says he, 'Count,'—he always called me Count,—says he, 'you'd better stay at home.'

"'Why?' says I.

"'It's dangerous hereabouts,' says he.

"'Think so?' says I.

"'Very dangerous,' says the old man. I thought I'd see what the old codger was up to, so says I:

"'What's the reason?'

"'Ghosts,' says he; and he looked as solemn as an owl.

"Seein' there wasn't nothin' to be made on either side, we soon parted, and as I walked along I stopped to gaze on a thunderin' fine white bull, which I saw by the moonlight, grazin' in the field. Next mornin' I found out that it was a new animal which old Nidd had been buyin', and I thought nothin' more about it. (Mr. Nidd drew farther into the shade.) Well, as near as I can recollect, it was about two nights after I had the talk with the old man, that I had been

spendin' the evenin' with Imogene, and stayed pretty late. The night was a little cloudy, but the moon was near its full, and I had all the light I wanted to go home by.

"I never could understand it before, nor since, but somehow or another there was a queerish kind of a haze pervadin' the air that night, but I didn't make much account of it, and sayin' good-night to Imogene, and puttin' a kiss on her ruby lips, I hopped over the fence and started home. Everything was serene, and I went a-whistlin' 'Comin' through the Rye.' As I came to the pasture-field, about two dozen acres big, I saw the white bull eatin' away in one corner, and I noticed as I got near the middle of the field that he behaved a little singular; but I didn't disturb myself any, for, says I, 'Ben, if that bull gets rambunctious, you know how to take care of yourself;' and I continued on. I had just got about in the middle of the field, when, thunder and Mars! here comes the bull towards me, puffin' and blowin' like a steam-engine, and his eyes a-glarin' like balls of fire——"

"What did you do?" interrupted one of the gentlemen, anxiously.

"Hold on," continued Mr. Wilkins; "all in good time. Well, thinks I, here's a go; and for a moment I felt as if I'd like to be on the other side of the fence. But there wasn't much time to think, and I made up my mind to fight it out. There wasn't time for me to take my coat off before the infernal monster come snortin', foamin', and dartin' into me; his head down and his tail up. I braced myself this way (Mr. Wilkins assumed an attitude of defense), and jist about the time the infernal scoundrel thought he'd give me a hook, I grabbed him by the horns, and was carried chuck off my feet before you could say Jack Robinson. But I held fast to the horns, and right then and there took place such a bull-fight as was never seen in those parts before, I'll bet a dollar. As soon as I could get my feet on the ground, and get a purchase, I give Mr. Bull a lurch and throwed him on his back; but he wasn't no sooner down than he was up again, and then we went pitchin' and tossin' around and around that field. First I'd throw him down, and then he'd toss me up; but I'd made up my mind to conquer or die, and I stuck to him. One time I thought it was all up with me; the rascal give me a pretty high toss, and when I come down, instead of lightin'

on my feet, as I intended, I fell on my side, and before I could get up he made for me like a bolt of greased lightnin'.

"My presence of mind is good at any time, but this here time it was wonderful that I should think at all; but I did, and in a flash my plans were laid. Up come the bull, the blood squirtin' from his nose, and his eyes fierier than ever; he was just goin' to hook me, when I rolled under his nose, grabbed his fore-feet, and tossed him over again on his back, lucky Ben Wilkins on top."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the Hon. Mr. Leatherhead.

"Wonderful, indeed!" exclaimed the other gentlemen.

"Well, that was the beginnin' of the end," continued Mr. Wilkins, complacently, "for, from that moment out, the fight was all one-sided. At last he got so that he couldn't stand on his pins any longer, and he laid over on his side. 'This is *my* time,' says I, leapin' to my feet; and, givin' a bound, I jumped on him with my heels, and continued to jump on him till there wasn't any more life in him than there is in that trunk.

"Now, gentlemen," said Wilkins, as the party made a movement to go, "the most singular part of the story is yet to come. When I got through with the fight of course I was tired, so started straight for home and went to bed. The next mornin' the folks were all up before I was, and when I come down-stairs the old man, my father, was standin' in the door.

"'Dad,' says I, 'I guess I've got you into trouble.'

"'Why?' says he.

"'I killed old Nidd's bull last night.'

"'Done what?' says he.

"'Killed Nidd's bull,' says I.

"'You're a fool!' says the old man, and he went on a-lookin' out of the door.

"'What's the matter?' says I.

"'Killed Nidd's bull?' says he. 'Not much, for there he stands now, jist like he stood before he was driv into the barn last evenin'.'

"'Wasn't that bull in that field all night?' says I.

"'No, sir-ee!' says the old man. And then I went on and told him just what had happened. He kind of doubted it at first, but when we went up to the field and seen the ground

all tore up, and pieces of the bull's hide and pieces of my clothes layin' around, and the white bull standin' as peaceful as a lamb, says the old man, 'Ben, you've been fightin' a ghost!' And, by thunder! that's just what I had done, for you might shake sixty thousand red blankets before that bull's face, and he'd never move a muscle."

His hearers were astounded.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Wilkins, after a pause, "there is nothin' much about this story except that it's a fact, and that I am here, livin' and well, to tell it."

"Liar!" hissed a voice which Wilkins knew full well, and Gascon Nidd walked past him into the street.

That liquor was necessary to put the finishing touch on such a story is believed to be eminently proper and requisite, and of course it was done. Here we must leave Mr. Wilkins, and attend to other matters of vital interest to the corps.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. WONTUS COMES TO GRIEF AND GOES TO PRISON, AND FINDS HIMSELF NOT ALONE—MR. NIDD IS EXERCISED IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

It is not within the province of a pen wielded by the hands of mortal man to depict the unexpressed feelings of Mr. Wontus as he hobbled along to the guard-house under the charge of a squad of soldiers, who were commanded by a sergeant who evidently knew nothing save his duty. Custom had made the men quick steppers, and it was not without great difficulty that the prisoner could keep his place in the ranks. Sometimes the admonition from the sergeant to "keep up there" induced Mr. Wontus to put forth his best efforts, for he felt sure that there was a mistake that could and would be rectified the moment he reached the head-quarters of the guard, and he desired that moment to arrive as speedily as possible. That Mr. Wontus was enraged is to be supposed from the fact that his face was very red, and large drops of perspiration stood out like beads upon his forehead. In vain he tried to

keep step; but the more he tried the more he found that he could not do it. One of the soldiers by his side endeavored to help the prisoner, but his endeavors were futile, and it was only when the party arrived at the guard-house, and Mr. Wontus was handed over to the tender care of the officer in charge, that he was relieved of the misery he felt while marching through the streets.

Once inside the guard-house, Mr. Wontus was conducted to the office, where he plunged himself into a chair, and ruminated, as dispassionately as circumstances would permit, over his present situation and the probabilities of his ever seeing his home again. While the prisoner was doing this the sergeant was making his report to the officer, at the conclusion of which that gentleman (the officer) said:

"Stand up, sir!"

Mr. Wontus, not supposing that any such command would be addressed to him, sat unmoved, with his head resting on his hands and his eyes fixed abstractedly on the floor.

"Stand up, sir!" cried the officer; this time in tones that not only made Mr. Wontus look up quickly, but made the very windows rattle.

Mr. Wontus cast his eyes around the room, but as there was nobody there except the officer, the sergeant, and himself, he wondered who the officer was speaking to. The sergeant was already standing; in fact, he had not sat down; the officer certainly could not be speaking to himself, and it finally occurred to him that perhaps he was the man addressed. He cast an inquiring glance on the officer, which was answered by the command:

"Stand up, sir,—*you!*"

Mr. Wontus stood up.

"Take off your hat," said the officer.

Mr. Wontus took off his hat.

"You have been brought here," said the officer, "charged with——"

"With what?" interrupted Mr. Wontus, excitedly.

"No interruptions, sir!" commanded the officer, savagely. "You are charged with giving aid, comfort, and assistance to the enemy; and, if I mistake not, you will get what so many of your kind richly deserve, a neck-tie, which, I assure you, will never wear out."

Mr. Wontus was almost speechless with astonishment. *He* giving aid and comfort to the enemy! Why, the very idea was not only preposterous, but was cruel and unnatural. But his train of thought was cut short by the officer commanding some invisible person to "escort the prisoner to the back parlor."

"This way," said a soldier, tapping Mr. Wontus on the shoulder; "this way,—come!" But Mr. Wontus did not come.

"What!" cried he, in a condition of fierce excitement, "am I to be incarcerated in a dungeon; me, Olympus Wontus? What have I done that I should be thus treated? Who are my accusers? Bring them forth, that I may crush them at a glance and force the horrible lies down, yes, down to their very bowels! Who are they, where are they, and what are they? Who knows aught of me that is tinged with treason or disloyalty? I love my government and its flag. I would die, if my dying would save it from destruction; and you would imprison *me*,—I who hate her enemies as a cat hates water! Oh, come, gentlemen! this is but a joke; it has gone far enough. Let me go, and I promise you that while I ought to report you to your superiors, yet I never will. Now come——"

"Come, come, me old flint," cried the man, "we've got no time to listen to what everybody's got to say that comes here. Come, follow me, or I'll take ye."

Mr. Wontus could not persuade himself but that the whole affair was a huge joke, and taking that view of it, indulged in a short hysteric laugh,—a sort of stage laugh,—which so exasperated the man who had charge of him that he insisted on Mr. Wontus accompanying him without further delay.

"I appeal to you, officer!" cried the prisoner; but that gentleman had taken his departure for more congenial quarters; and ere Mr. Wontus was aware of what was exactly going on, the guard walked up behind him, and, taking him up in his arms, endeavored to force him through the doorway. But Mr. Wontus was not to be put away from daylight and liberty without a struggle, and then and there commenced a battle which has never found a place in any history outside of these pages.

For some moments it looked as though the guard was destined to be successful in his undertaking; but the advantage

was momentary, for Mr. Wontus no sooner found himself going through the doorway than he threw out his legs and arms, thus making a figure like the letter X, and defied the herculean efforts of his captor to get him an inch farther. Mr. Wontus did not offer to strike, but simply vigorously opposed his ejectment from the room. His lips were compressed, and his face, though very red, wore a most determined aspect. The guard pushed, pulled, and swore; Mr. Wontus kept up his X, and groaned with every surge. Now the guard undertook to dash him on the floor, but even there Mr. Wontus was too much for him, and when they did fall Mr. Wontus was on top. The prisoner's foot did not hurt him, or if it did, he did not heed it, and the moment he was able to disentangle himself from the prostrate man, he sought the protection of the officer's desk, behind which article of furniture he stood at bay, puffing like a porpoise, while the guard called lustily for the corporal of the guard. It was not many moments before that much-used and much-abused official put in an appearance, backed by some half a dozen of his attendants. The condition of affairs was soon explained by the man, and without further ado Mr. Wontus was taken bodily up, and conveyed to that portion of the establishment known as the best parlor—which was base irony —amid shouts of laughter. The imprecations which the prisoner bestowed on the guard, and the whole world besides, were loud and long, but they availed nothing, for when he reached the "parlor" door he was placed on his feet and pushed headlong down.

I cannot describe the "parlor" any further than to say that it was dark and gloomy, and a few degrees warmer than the temperature outside, and that it was the common receptacle of every class and description of people who happened to be arrested, and whose cases had not been disposed of. It is a singular fact, but none the less true for being singular, that most soldiers will get drunk! As there were a great many about Washington at this time, it is reasonable to suppose that some of them fell into the clutches of the guard, and through that instrumentality found their way to the guard-house. At any rate, the company into which Mr. Wontus had been so unexpectedly precipitated was composed mostly of that class of people, and the arrival of a civilian was hailed with the greatest imaginable joy.

The cry of "fresh fish" sounded in all directions, and it was some moments after he entered before he could distinguish objects in the gloom; but his eyes soon became accustomed to it, and he glanced about him for a place to sit down. Nothing met his gaze but the bare walls and floor. In desperation he sank down on the boards, and burying his face in his hands, commenced to meditate and grieve over his truly lamentable situation.

"Heaven be merciful!" he cried; and he would have continued his prayer to a greater extent but for the interruption of his fellow-prisoners.

"Who are yez?" said a tall cavalryman, whose language indicated that he was an Irishman.

"I'm a poor, lone, lorn, lost man," sighed Mr. Wontus, without looking up.

"An' where does yez come from?" queried the cavalryman.

"New York," cried Mr. Wontus.

"An' fwhat are yez here for?"

Mr. Wontus made no reply.

"Been a tippin' yer negus, I dunno, ain't yez?"

Mr. Wontus said that he did not understand.

"Have yez any of the crathur about your clothes? do yez understand *that?*"

To this our hero replied that if the gentleman meant liquor, he could truthfully say that he had not.

"Got any tobackee?" asked a little man, whose clothes were considerably the worse for wear, or bad treatment.

"No, sir, I haven't."

"Got any soap?" continued the little man with the ragged clothes.

"Yes," cried a score of voices, "have you got any money?"

The prisoners, at the cry of "fresh fish," when Wontus entered the room, had assembled, and were now clustered about him.

"If you have," continued the little man, "give it to us."

Mr. Wontus declined, and therefore a tumult arose during which he feared for his life. "Gag 'em!" cried one: "Smother 'em!" cried another; and equally threatening language was coming from every quarter when the loud voice of the Irishman was heard above all the rest:

"Hould on there, ye howlin' divils, ye!" he shouted. "Have yez no respect for the feelin's of a gintleman, ye murtherin' wretches, that you'd frighten 'em out of 'em's wits? Yez have no manners; that what yez haven't." And stooping down so that his voice only reached the ear of Mr. Wontus, he continued: "Could yez lend me the loan of a dollar or two, sur, for to keep the howlin' devils quiet wid? I'm an honest man, sur, an' wouldn't see a hair of your blessed head harmed, for the blessin' of the saints."

"There, there!" cried Mr. Wontus, handing all the money he happened to have about him to his new-found friend. "Take it, but for Heaven's sake keep them men away from me; I'm on the verge of insanity now. You'll pay me back sometime, I know you will."

"Ye have the honest word of Michael Skilligan for that, sur." And as he spoke he cast a droll glance at his companions, crammed the money into his pocket, and drew off to another part of the room, followed by the others. The room resounded with cheer after cheer soon after, and Mr. Wontus was left for a time to his own sorrowful reflections.

There are a great many things and circumstances about a large army which may be called mysterious; but probably the most mysterious of all is to tell exactly how and where the soldiers get liquor. Cases have come under notice where, from the situation of the troops, it was believed that to procure a drop of liquor was simply an impossibility, and yet, just at such times and places, the poorest soldiers in the command would be found as drunk as lords day after day, defying the most searching inquiries and investigations.

Mr. Wontus found it next to impossible to secure a glass of water and a piece of bread, but he noticed, with alarm, that his fellow-prisoners not only had plenty to eat, but were quenching their thirst from a well-filled jug of whisky,—which jug was most jealously guarded by the Irishman who had borrowed his money. He knew it was whisky, for he had found it absolutely necessary to taste it.

As night threw its sombre mantle over the guard-house, what had been bedlam before now became pandemonium. Men, wild with the excitement produced by the liquor they had quaffed, made the night, as near as Mr. Wontus was able to imagine it, a perfect hell, and it was not until they had

become so drunk that they could no longer stand up, that the turmoil ceased. Not until then did Mr. Wontus permit himself to rise from the floor and pace the narrow space left him by his companions, who were lying in every conceivable position about the floor. How long he continued his walk, and what he thought of during his walk, it is impossible to say, but it is known that in course of time he became wearied and tired, and sank down near the door, and soon after fell into a fitful sleep, during which he had most horrible visions of death in every shape, but always in the presence of the military.

It must have been far into the night, and at a moment when our hero imagined himself on a scaffold, with the halter around his neck and the drop ready to fall, when the door of the "parlor" was suddenly opened, and just as suddenly shut again. Mr. Wontus awoke in a terrible condition of mind, the cold drops of perspiration oozing from every pore, and was on the point of crying murder when he was arrested by a voice which he thought he had heard before, singing,—

"My name is Cap—Cap'n Kidd,
As I sail, as I sail;
My name is Cap'n Kidd,
As I sail, as I sail.
My name is Cap'n Kidd
I've———"

"Wilkins—Mr. Wilkins!" whispered Mr. Wontus, without moving, and the singing ceased. "Mr. Wilkins!" again whispered Mr. Wontus.

"Ah, ha! What do I see before me? Who cal-calls?"

"Is it you, Mr. Wilkins?" whispered Mr. Wontus, rising to a sitting posture, and making a speaking trumpet of his hands.

"'Tis me—'tis I! Ham (hic) let, the Dane, and my name is Cap'n Kidd, as I sa——"

"Sh!" cried Mr. Wontus, beneath his breath. "Be quiet, or we shall be murdered. Draw near—this way, Mr. Wilkins. Oh, I am so glad you are here! A little to the right, Mr. Wilkins; there, now sit down. Softly, Mr. Wilkins, for this place is full of fiends incarnate. I've been expecting to be murdered, drawn, and quartered ever since I've been in this horrible place."

"Mis'er Won-wontus," said Mr. Wilkins, without appearing to heed the caution of his employer, "you musbe drunk—*I am!*" And having uttered these words, Mr. Wilkins, for it was none other than that redoubtable personage, stretched himself out on the floor, with the assistance of Mr. Wontus, and in a few moments was snoring away in perfect cadence and harmony with the others, leaving Mr. Wontus to spend the balance of the night as best he could, which, as may be readily imagined, was miserable enough.

The reader will please retrace his steps (more properly, his thoughts) to the moment when Mr. Nidd pronounced the expressive word *Liar!* and walked out of Willard's Hotel with a full and complete understanding within himself that Benjamin Wilkins should be amply paid for the free and unconstrained manner in which he had used his (Nidd's) name.

It is always "evening" after noon among the natives of the capital; therefore, to make the distinction, it becomes necessary for me to say that it was night when Mr. Nidd ushered himself into the quarters of the corps on D Street. There was no light in the room, as was customary, but Mr. Nidd was in no humor to notice things very particularly, and it was not until he had lighted the gas that he observed he was the only occupant of the room. He was not alarmed at this, only a little surprised, for no later than the morning Mr. Wontus had declared that his foot was much worse, and that it was utterly impossible for him to take any out-door exercise. In the fact that Thomas Thomson was also absent, it was fair to presume that Mr. Wontus had changed his mind; and, by way of occupying his time, Mr. Nidd procured writing materials, and sat down to write a letter—which was but fulfilling a promise—to Mrs. Squirm. Business had made him a rather slow and prosy composer at best, and it was only after a long while that he succeeded in producing the following letter, which, I may say, bears, to some extent, the impress of a mind tinged with a curious mixture of love, and conveyancing and mysterious threats:

AT THE CAPITAL OF THE NATION.

MY DEAR MRS. SQUIRM: *Madam*,—I have seen much of the world since leaving your hospitable roof, and have been subjected to many adventures appertaining to said sight of the world aforesaid. My recollections of your house and

its appurtenances are of the most pleasing kind, and I feel as though I had some right, title, and interest therein; provided, always, nevertheless, that the presence therein of a certain being, by the name of H——, is in nowise desired or permitted by the—I may say—charming occupant thereof. In contemplating the aforesaid H——'s infamous presumption in prosecuting all that certain widow, who shall be nameless, for a dower, I am sometimes led to commit, in my mind, a homicide, and fear to contemplate what might be should I meet the said H—— in the aforesaid house or lot, or in any of the ways, or courses, or appurtenances thereof whatsoever. Let him beware! of the which he now hath timely notice.

My dear Mrs. Squirm, as first above written, I should have written to you at some previous time; but the scenes and incidents, as hereinbefore mentioned, appertaining to a man of the world, of the which, I may say, I have become one, have prevented me from accomplishing the document last above referred to. Pardon this seeming neglect; in consideration whereof I hereby bargain, consent, and agree not to allow it to occur again, as will more fully and at large appear.

With deep feeling for your welfare, and earnest desire to do bodily injury to the said H——, I am, my dear Mrs. Squirm, as aforesaid, yours, etc., GASCON NIDD.

The adage has it that "habit is second nature;" and if the foregoing letter proves anything, it verifies the truth of the adage, and conclusively shows that a man may become so thoroughly accustomed to using regular set expressions and terms that they even find a place in productions that are not of a business nature. Nidd himself was a man of habit. Habit had made him the severe business man referred to by Mr. Wontus in the earlier records of the corps; and when he signed his name to the foregoing he also added the words, "signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of ——." But it occurred to him that that language was not exactly the language for a production which he chose to term a love-letter, and he expunged them with his knife, folded the letter carefully, and addressed it to Mrs. Squirm.

The letter being sealed, and a stamp affixed, Mr. Nidd consulted his watch, and said, "Ten o'clock! Something wrong here;" and he then opened the window and looked up and

down the street, and then resumed his seat. A half-hour more passed, but still no signs of any single member of the corps. He became alarmed, and walked to the head of the stairs, and called lustily for the landlady. That personage, who was entirely familiar with some of the important incidents narrated in the foregoing, was evidently expecting to be called upon, and Mr. Nidd's voice had scarcely ceased to sound through the house when a female voice from below demanded to know what was wanted.

"Where's Mr. Wontus?" asked Mr. Nidd, down the stairs.

"Gone."

"Where's Thomson?"

"Gone out!"

"Where have they gone to; do you know, ma'am?"

"The first mentioned has been arrested by the authorities, and the other one has gone out—I don't know where," cried the female voice.

There was silence for a few moments.

"Madam, I would like to speak to you; will you come up, or shall I come down?" asked Mr. Nidd; but without waiting for a reply the gentleman started down-stairs, at the bottom of which he found the landlady.

It is said of the daughters of Oceanus and Amphitrite that their smiles were so charming that those of the other sex who beheld them were so completely spell-bound that they found it impossible to move, and hence often died of starvation. Now, I cannot say that Mr. Nidd's landlady had aspirations anything like the mythological young ladies referred to, but certain it is that when Mr. Nidd found her her face was wreathed in smiles, and her manner most entertaining and captivating. At almost any other time during the life of Mr. Nidd, that gentleman would have fallen a ready victim to the slightest blandishments of a woman like his landlady; but now his mind was filled with other subjects (and he carried the letter to Mrs. Squirm in his pocket), so, without heeding the mellow voice and sweet smile, he bravely asked the lady what she knew of Mr. Wontus. She insisted on Mr. Nidd walking into the parlor, but the gentleman declined on account of the lateness of the hour, and repeated his question. Still she insisted on his walking in, and it was only when Mr. Nidd's patience was well-nigh exhausted that the lady vouchsafed the infor-

mation, in rather bitter tones, that Mr. Wontus had been devoting a great part of his time recently to a rebel woman who roomed in the third-story front, and that the provost-marshal had sent a guard to arrest him.

"Why, what for?" anxiously inquired Mr. Nidd, whose eyes had been thoroughly opened by the statement of the lady.

"I asked one of the men," replied the landlady, "and he said that the dear man was charged with aidin' and supportin' the rebellion."

"The devil you say!" cried Mr. Nidd, excitedly. "And they took him off?"

"Yes, sir! Poor man! how my very heart did ache when I saw him marchin' off between them ugly soldiers! We'ans have no peace anywhar any more, anyhow." She looked as though she might weep with a slight effort.

"Where's Thomson?" shouted Nidd, abruptly rushing up the stairs.

"Gone out, sir!"

Mr. Nidd stopped to hear no more, but leaving a short note informing the other members of the corps that he had gone out in search of Mr. Wontus, he was about rushing into the street, when Thomas Thomson's face, as pale as ashes, confronted him. In a moment Mr. Nidd had seized that individual by the collar, and dragged him up-stairs.

"Now, sir, where is your master?" said Mr. Nidd.

"Gone to be a corpse of observation, I reckon," replied Mr. Thomson, throwing himself into a chair, and speaking most dolefully. "He's been wantin' for to do it for a long time, and I guess he's gone."

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Nidd, passionately. "No trifling, you scoundrel! where is Mr. Wontus? answer me quickly, or by sand-hill, I'll brain you!" Mr. Nidd was almost beside himself, and that he should be is not at all surprising when we recollect that the brief statement which he received from the landlady was but a poor guide to turn his ideas into such a current as would attribute any crime whatsoever to his dearest friend, and now he demanded again a full explanation from Thomas Thomson. Fear of personal violence assisted Mr. Thomson to find his tongue, and he quickly informed Mr. Nidd of all the facts concerning the arrest, together with some observations on the singular conduct of the landlady. Further

he could not say, although he had been out all evening searching for the place at which Mr. Wontus was confined.

"I see," said Mr. Nidd, assuming a thoughtful attitude and consulting his watch. "Jealousy!"

Complete and, to Thomas Thomson, most painful silence reigned for some time, and when it was broken, the breach was made by Mr. Nidd. His voice had assumed its accustomed dry philosophical tone, and his face was bereft of any of those traces which the philologists put under the head of the word "feeling."

"Thomson," said Mr. Nidd, rubbing the palms of his hands on his knees, "what has brought all this about?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Thomson, meekly.

"Was it a woman?"

"I think it was, sir."

"Oh, you think it was?"

"Yes, sir."

"What woman?"

"I don't know, sir."

"The devil you don't!" cried Mr. Nidd, with some asperity; but after a moment's pause, he added, in his usual voice: "Was it the woman up-stairs or the woman down-stairs?"

"I think it was, sir."

"You think *what* was?"

"I think it was one of 'em."

"Yes, yes,—I know; but which one?"

"If I was blistered, sir, I couldn't tell."

"Was Mr. Wontus anyways sociable with the woman up-stairs?"

"I think he was." And Mr. Thomson commenced edging towards the door.

"With the woman down-stairs?" continued Mr. Nidd.

"I think he was, as also with her too, sir; but not so much as 'tother one."

"Stop!" commanded Mr. Nidd, noticing Tommy's intention to leave the room. Tommy stopped. "Sit down," commanded Mr. Nidd. Thomson sat down. "Now, sir, I want you to tell me truly, and as precisely as you can, just what has happened in this house since your master has been indisposed. I think I see where the trouble lies; but I must know my case thoroughly, as the lawyers say, before I commence proceedings. Don't be afraid, Mr. Thomson; it is all for Mr.

Wontus's benefit, and I'll see that your part in the matter is fully explained."

Mr. Nidd was compelled to use further seductive arguments before he could induce the man to divulge anything; but at length Mr. Thomson opened his heart, and Mr. Nidd's eyes, by the recital of much that the reader already knows, together with a full interpretation of sundry glances and mutterings which the landlady had made use of on divers occasions when she found Mr. Wontus so attentive to the sick woman.

"And the sick woman's a rebel, eh?"

"A rank rebel. I heard her say so to Mr. Wontus this very day."

"Very good, very good," cried Mr. Nidd, rising. "All plain. The old fool! Women, women! I thought so, goll if I didn't." With this indelicate but expressive language, Mr. Nidd again looked at his watch, remarked that Wilkins was not in yet, and, dismissing Mr. Thomson, soon after turned into bed.

Mr. Nidd was not exactly the type of a handsome man at any time, but there were times when he looked worse than he did on others. The next morning his appearance was anything but prepossessing. His short hair would persist in standing out in a way very shocking to the rules of propriety, and his face was darker than ever. During breakfast he uttered not so much as a syllable to Mr. Thomson, and it was only after he had lit his cigar that he deigned to say that he was going out in search of Mr. Wontus, and intended bringing him back with him. He spoke calmly and deliberately, but would not listen to Mr. Thomson's offer to accompany him. He would go alone.

Men, great numbers of them, have had the privilege of seeing, among the other mysteries of Washington, a tall, genteel gentleman, whose suave manners and graceful mien occasionally made him the admiration of the ladies, and whose little peculiarities made him an object of more than passing interest to every male visitor at the capital. I have said that he was *occasionally* the admiration of the ladies: those occasions were when he was in that condition vulgarly called "luck," and at such times he found himself encased in a suit of clothes, if not exactly in the fashion, why, very near it. His face was as familiar to the tradespeople of the city as the dome of the Capitol, and his appearance at any man's door

was the signal for closing the same. He was the mortal foe of tailors, shoemakers, and others who dealt in gentlemen's ware. The moment a stranger set up business this man was sure to hear of it, and unless the stranger was very quick he was made to pay the penalty of his tardiness with a suit of clothes or something of that sort. Beau Goodsell was as distinctive a feature in Washington as Brummel, years ago, was in London.

Hotels, unlike other establishments, cannot very well close their doors on a man, particularly if that man is good-natured as well as polite and agreeable. Therefore, the man called Beau Goodsell—and who, by the way, might have been the owner of some other name—was a constant guest at the different hotels: not the kind of guest which we usually mean when we use that term, but one of those peculiar guests who, through having nothing else to do, soon come to look upon themselves as a part of the furniture or other fixtures. Nobody ever knew how Mr. Goodsell lived; in fact, it is questionable whether he knew himself, since it was so seldom that he could be seen outside of some one of the hotels on the avenue. He was vivacious, and necessity had made him quick to seize on everything that could turn to his advantage. He was never known to have any money, at least not in those days, but played the same part to society that a barnacle does to a ship. That it should turn out as unfortunate that a gentleman like this and one like Mr. Wilkins should accidentally meet, the sequel will show.

When Mr. Nidd passed out of the hotel, at the conclusion of Mr. Wilkins's short story, another gentleman passed in; and it was not long before the gentleman who had just entered espied Mr. Wilkins. To a stranger, and even to those who knew him well, Mr. Wilkins's appearance was at times deceptive. His manner was that of a man of the world, and when Mr. Goodsell saw him he felt sure that there was fish for his net. When the party went into the bar-room to liquor he followed, and nodded to Wilkins as one casual acquaintance would nod to another. It is almost superfluous to say that Mr. Wilkins returned the nod with compound interest.

Mr. Goodsell knew Mr. Wilkins.

Mr. Wilkins was ready to swear that he had met Mr. Goodsell at the verge of the crater of Vesuvius.

Mr. Goodsell recollected the circumstance perfectly well.

Mr. Wilkins had forgotten his name. Mr. Goodsell gave it to him, and Mr. Wilkins introduced him to the Hon. Mr. Leatherhead and the rest. The military men smiled knowingly, and all drank. Then they conversed a little while, and all drank again. A little more conversation, and all drank again. Mr. Wilkins was very polite to Mr. Goodsell, and Mr. Goodsell was very polite to Mr. Wilkins.

Question by Hon. Mr. Leatherhead: "Will you gentlemen take tea with me?"

The gentlemen were only too happy, and did take tea; and after that visited the Canterbury, where they drank many times—so many times that Mr. Goodsell allowed that he was "a little *gone*," but for all that volunteered to accompany Mr. Wilkins home. The Hon. Mr. Leatherhead and the military gentlemen went one way, and Mr. Wilkins and his new-found friend would have gone another had it not been that that fearful guard, the provost, caught them. Mr. Wilkins vowed that he belonged to the French embassy, and Mr. Goodsell was not only willing to swear that such was the fact, but went further, and did swear it. But the provost was incorrigible. Mr. Goodsell had evidently been in their hands before, and was summarily dismissed; but Mr. Wilkins, despite his most vehement and indignant protests, followed by magnificent promises and maudlin entreaties, was marched off to the guard-house.

A SCENE AT WILLARD'S.

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CHAPTER XIII.

MAKES USE OF THE PRESIDENT AND LIBERATES THE HERO FROM PRISON.

"A prison is a house of care,
A place where none can thrive,
A touchstone true to try a friend,
A grave for one alive;
Sometimes a place of right,
Sometimes a place of wrong,
Sometimes a place of rogues and thieves,
And honest men among."

THESE lines, or thoughts of similar import, ran through Mr. Wontus's head, as, for the first time, he permitted his eyes to wander calmly from object to object, until he had taken a full and complete survey of the room and its occupants. The new-born day had just rolled back the sombre sheet of night and opened his wondrous eye, so full of light and beauty, and Phœbus, as fresh as a bridegroom to his mate, came dancing forth, smiling as he did so, until his whole path was lit up with the dazzling beauty of his morning robes. From far over the tree-tops in the distant east came the brazen glances of Sol, first tinging the plumes on the head of America (on the dome of the Capitol) with his golden touch, and then throwing aslant his glances over the house-tops until they found their way through the barred windows and into the guard-room where Mr. Wontus was having a new experience.

Snoring lustily by his side was the prostrate form of Mr. Wilkins, and lying in different parts of the room were the forms of the men, rendered careless and hard by constant association with misery and death. The blast of trumpets and the beating of drums sounding the reveille, and habit soon brought most of the shapeless masses of humanity to their feet, and they assumed the form of men. Mr. Wontus was on his feet,—in fact, he had been in that position most of the night; for fear, and the horrible thought that through his

ignorance of military affairs he might have been innocently guilty of some act which made him amenable to the law, so worked upon his nervous system that he would have found it impossible to sleep even had he been provided with a comfortable bed. Reaction had set in, and the courage which he had so wonderfully displayed the day before gently simmered away, until morning found it much worse than it had been since his incarceration, and supplanted by the most distressing goblins of a badly-shattered and distressed mind. He endeavored to shake off the feeling, and hoped to assist himself in so doing by conversation with some of his fellow-prisoners. His Irish friend was yet stretched out upon the floor, and a desire to talk with somebody induced him to single out an individual. Near him, sitting on the floor, with his feet drawn up, his arms locked over his knees, and his face resting on them, was a soldier whom Mr. Wontus ventured to address.

"Good-morning, sir," said he, speaking in a low and modest tone. "Good-morning."

Mr. Wontus was really startled at the sound of his own voice, but the soldier neither heeded the remark nor displayed the slightest indication that he had even heard him. The step once taken, Mr. Wontus felt that he must follow it up.

"Good-morning, sir," he repeated; this time a little louder than before.

No movement or reply.

"Fine morning," said Mr. Wontus, looking toward the grated window.

"Go to ——!" shouted the soldier, vehemently, using such language as made even Mr. Wontus tremble, and hence would be highly improper to mention here. Its effect was instantaneous and salutary, for Mr. Wontus at once shrank back, and thought he had good reason to venture no further remarks.

It was not many moments after the instance just narrated, before the door swung open, and the officer of the guard and a file of men walked into the room, and shouted, "Fall in, company Q!"

The seventeenth letter of the alphabet is probably not one of the most euphonious, nor should it be understood by the unmilitary mind as being any part or parcel of a regimental organization, and yet company Q was quite as familiar to many men in the army as any other company was to the regimental

commander. It had, at the time I write, and will no doubt continue to have, one most striking peculiarity, that is, that it never needs the services of a recruiting officer to keep it up to the standard. Another thing concerning this particular company is its rather paradoxical condition at all times, viz., that it is always full, even if it has but one man in it, and can be, and is, dispensed with at any moment, and without a pang of regret. Other companies of a regiment melt away, or fall like the tender grass before the scythe, and are spoken of in wonderful whispers; but company Q may melt (it never falls), but it will not stay melted, for a breath may instill into its weakening ranks all the excitement and vigor of a giant. To continue.

Slowly and sadly the men ranged themselves along one side of the room, preparatory to being counted and answering to the call of the roll. The noise and bustle had no effect upon Mr. Wilkins, further than to induce him to change his position a little, and it was not until he had received the particular attention of the toe of the officer's boot that he managed to get himself into a sitting posture. Among the things that I have often heard of, but which I have never seen, is a toad eating fire; in fact, I can scarcely bring my mind to believe that a toad will eat fire at all, at least voluntarily, and yet I have been informed on more than one occasion that certain people's eyes snapped and winked "like a toad eating fire." Taking it for granted, then, that a toad will eat fire, and that his eyes will have a very peculiar appearance during the moments that he is indulging in that rather exciting diet, I may be excused for saying that Mr. Wilkins's eyes snapped like a toad eating fire, as he gazed with stupid wonderment at his surroundings. As for Mr. Wontus, he had an idea, which was soon put to flight, however, that he had nothing in common with the other prisoners, and accordingly walked to the other end of the room. The officer had kept his eye on Mr. Wontus, and as soon as Wilkins had been made to understand what was expected of him, and had taken his place in the ranks of company Q, the officer commanded Mr. Wontus to come forward and take his place in the ranks. This was the crowning of his trouble; and when at length he had taken his place in the line and answered to his name, the tears welled up in his eyes, and he gave vent to such a sigh as to cause the soldiers nearest to him to look upon him with pity.

The roll called and the prisoners again counted, the officer and his men withdrew, and soon after breakfast was served. Now this breakfast was no better and no worse than the soldiers in the field were eating, and consisted of a box of bread, a piece of cold boiled pork, and a tincup of coffee; but had it been the most savory dish from the hand of Soyer, Mr. Wontus could not have enjoyed it. Through the kindness of one of his fellow-prisoners, who loaned him his cup, Mr. Wontus partook of a little coffee, but with that exception he fasted.

Mr. Wilkins had evidently slept himself into forgetfulness, or else he purposely avoided Mr. Wontus, for both names were called among the W's; at any rate, he did not come in contact with him, but buried himself in conversation with the prisoners. Mr. Wontus was in too much trouble to notice this particularly, and had taken his place in a dark corner of the room, when the well-remembered voice of Michael Skilligan shouted:

"Howly Mother! the relief! Hurrah, boys, the new guard's come; but we'll be out o' this I dunno purty soon!" It cannot be known whether Mr. Skilligan meant this to be a mere remembrance of pleasure, or whether he intended it as an interrogatory; but whatever it was intended for, it appeared to answer all purposes, and at once the men gathered up their blankets and clustered about the doorway.

"Come out o' that, ye auld guffin," cried the Irishman, beckoning vigorously to Mr. Wontus. Mr. Wontus obeyed, and took his place at the end of the line. Wilkins was some distance ahead of him, but he now noticed Mr. Wontus, and, with certain grimaces and contortions, insisted on Wontus taking his place. W. answered only by a melancholy inclination of the head, and the doors being opened, the prisoners were marched out. Mr. Wontus followed in the line, and was persuading himself to insist on an apology for the treatment he had experienced; but when he came to pass through the door the guard placed his musket across the way, and remarked, as he shut the door with a bang:

"You can't go just now, mister. Only the boys that have to join their regiments are wanted." And Mr. Wontus tottered back into the guard-house, and paced the floor in a condition of mind bordering on insanity.

Let us now return to the other members of the corps.

With tremendous strides Gascon Nidd passed through the City Hall square, up E to Seventh, thence to F, and thence to the Avenue and Seventeenth Street. Having, by inquiry, ascertained that the commandant of the city was in his office, Mr. Nidd rushed through the crowd which thronged the sidewalk, and no doubt would have made his way immediately to the presence of the general, had it not been for the persuasions of one of the boys in blue, who, the more Mr. Nidd insisted on passing him, the more he insisted that he should not; and it was not until that gentleman had been forced back into the crowd that he bethought himself of the necessity of caution and clever engineering. He wrote his name on a card, and, doing it up in a bill, he gave it to a messenger, and begged that it be presented. Mr. Nidd was shown up in a few moments, while men who came before him, but who were not possessed of the "open sesame," waited.

His name was announced, and he was shown into the presence of the commandant. Mr. Nidd was accustomed to cutting business short, and, without unnecessary delay, he laid the whole affair of Mr. Wontus's arrest before the officer.

"Very sorry, sir," said the general, "but that's a very serious charge; and while what you say may be perfectly true, yet I do not feel like acting hastily in the matter."

"Who is his accuser?" asked Mr. Nidd.

The officer took some papers up and announced that the charge was signed by a lady by the name of Battadore.

"The landlady!" cried Mr. Nidd. "I thought so!" And then he undertook to explain how the charges were entirely false and groundless; how an act of kindness was made to appear a crime.

The general listened patiently, and at the conclusion of Mr. Nidd's remarks proceeded to say that the government had experienced so much treachery in the most unlooked-for places, that it had been determined upon to throttle treason wherever it was found. He was sorry to hear that a gentleman like Mr. Wontus should be among the sufferers, but as the charges had been made, and he knew nothing concerning the truth or falsity of them, he considered it his duty to investigate them. He could not tell when the investigation would take place, but he hoped within a day or two. As he concluded, he rang a bell, and a man presented himself who had lost a horse, and believed he had been stolen, but by whom he could not say,—never-

theless he believed it was the soldiers, and he had come to secure the money value of the horse from the government.

Mr. Nidd saw that he was to receive no further attention, and having given his address to the commandant, he left the building sorely troubled. At first he thought he would go to see Mr. Wontus, but it occurred to him that unless he had good news for him he had better remain away; and it was while these thoughts were passing through his head that it occurred to him that it might result in some good for him to call on Mr. Lincoln. Passing down the avenue, he proceeded directly to the White House.

It was yet early—scarcely nine o'clock, I think—when he walked in and proceeded directly to the waiting-room. Once here a sight met his eyes which at once gave him the true interpretation of Mr. Lincoln's care-worn look. The waiting-room itself was not only filled to overflowing with people, but the halls and lobbies had each their quota. A gentleman sat at a desk in the centre of the room and received the cards of the visitors as they were presented, and gave such information to inquiries as was called for. Here were women robed in the weeds of mourning, who came to ask the intercession of the chief magistrate of the nation for a son, now languishing in some one of the prison-pens of the South. Here, a man whose son had enlisted in the army against his will; there, a woman with brazen effrontery demanding pay for a barn in which she had concealed a party of the enemy; here, an officer who had been dismissed the service, and wished to be reinstated; there, a congressman who wished a place for his henchman; yonder, a man who asks a contract; there, a general who wishes to complain of the treatment he had received from his superior; here, a man who wishes to advise as to the proper mode of conducting the war; and scores of others stand by, eager and determined to secure the private ear of the President. How many tales of woe and sorrow; how many stories of falseness and cruelty; how many words indicative of all the different passions which actuate men, does this man have to listen to each day, thought Mr. Nidd, as he surveyed the groups; and then he added, who would be the President of the republic at such a time as this? He answered the query himself, and declared that with all his poverty and obscurity he would not change places.

It was over an hour ere Mr. Nidd succeeded in being presented to the President, and during all this time the crowd of visitors multiplied, until there was scarcely standing room left.

"Mr. Gascon Nidd!" shouted the usher, and Mr. Nidd followed him into the room and stood in the presence of the President. He sat at his desk writing, and the same sad smile played about his mouth and looked out of his eyes.

"Well, sir," asked the President, in a commonplace, weary tone, "what can I do for you?" As he spoke he looked up, and seeing the tall form of Mr. Nidd bowing before him like a slender reed bows to the wind, his eye lit up, and reaching out his hand, remarked, "You want something; sit down."

What in Mr. Nidd had been respect before was now veneration, and he felt as he never felt before, and never expected to be made feel by mortal man. The multitude of people who had seen the President already this morning, and the throng yet to come, presented themselves before him like the figures of a vision, and he felt that it would be better in him to seek some other channel.

"Excuse me, sir," remarked the President, after a brief pause; "I have much to attend to, as you see, for I must speak a comforting word to all these people who come to me with their troubles, as well as attend to the other business of my office. What can I do for you? I know you want something."

"Mr. Lincoln," said Mr. Nidd, apologetically, "I am very sorry to have to trouble you,—you who have so much to attend to, and I——"

"Never mind, my friend; we have no time for apologies; speak what you wish." And the President's long fingers moved nervously, as though they would go on with the work of their own volition.

Mr. Nidd comprehended the case and at once commenced giving the President a history of Mr. Wontus's situation in the clearest possible manner, not forgetting to put forth his philanthropy and patriotism in the very best possible light. The President listened patiently, and at the conclusion asked Mr. Nidd if he could call again at eight o'clock in the evening. "I can give you no good reason to hope," said the President, as Mr. Nidd moved toward the door, "but call at that hour,

and we will see what can be done; in the mean time go see your friend, and tell him to be of good cheer; to never say die; the darkest hour, you know, is just before day. I sometimes think that it is the hour before day with our army, and that it is not rightly awake yet." And smiling, he touched the bell, the usher appeared, Mr. Nidd walked out, and others took his place.

Nidd at once proceeded to the guard-house, where he had a rather distressing and protracted interview with Mr. Wontus, who, after having the affair fully explained to him, appeared to gain back some of his lost spirit and courage, and his friend left him after a time in a condition as cheerful as any man could be who was confined in prison for befriending the cause that imprisoned him; for as yet Mr. Wontus was entirely at sea concerning the reason for the charges.

On arriving at his lodgings the first individual Nidd met was Mr. Wilkins, who had attended to his wardrobe, and presented quite a respectable appearance. When Mr. Nidd informed him that Wontus was in the guard-house, Wilkins elevated his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and remarked in the most commonplace way that he had only left him a few hours since, and knew all about it. Mr. Nidd quite forgot the use that Mr. Wilkins had made of his name the evening previous, and with more interest than he usually displayed, insisted on Wilkins telling him all about it. As the reader is already aware that he knew nothing of the incarceration of Mr. Wontus, except the mere fact that he had seen him in the guard-house, it is only necessary to state that his story to Mr. Nidd was strangely at variance with the facts, because he avowed that he had insisted on being confined simply that he might be enabled to protect and afford Mr. Wontus the solace of company.

"Much to my regret," he continued, "Mr. Wontus didn't want any company, and paid as little attention to me as he could."

Mr. Nidd's next business was to find the landlady, which he did without trouble, that lady being very close to the door and in a position which might suggest that she had been listening. Mr. Nidd opened the business in rather sharp, legal style, and before the lady was rightly aware of what he was saying, had showered upon her such a quantity of language,

in which the words lie, false charges, meanness, sick woman, and jealousy were prominently set forth, that at the conclusion the lady said he was a brute, and that she should faint, and accordingly passed to her own apartment to indulge in that luxury.

Following this, Mr. Nidd insisted on Thomas Thomson escorting him up-stairs and introducing him to the sick woman. Mr. Thomson reluctantly consented, and it was done. Mr. Nidd was not exactly prepared to meet the sight afforded him on entering the room, and he quailed beneath the flashing eye that met his. The lady asked him twice what his business was before he answered; but finally he found his tongue, and gave her the full particulars as far as his knowledge went, not once forgetting, however, to give to the treacherous landlady her full quantum of credit. The invalid expressed pain, mortification, and sorrow, and blamed herself for being the sole cause of all Mr. Wontus's trouble.

Before Nidd had seen the lady he was fully convinced that she had considerable to answer for in the matter; but now that he had seen her, that she was before him, such thoughts faded away, and he was ready to avow, in the strongest terms necessary, that she was in no way answerable. She recounted Mr. Wontus's many virtues; how noble-hearted and kind he was, and how he saved her and her child from a condition of abject poverty and misery. It is probable that Mr. Nidd spent a longer time than was absolutely necessary with the invalid; but, like other things, the interview had an end, and he and Mr. Thomson, who had been present all the time, started to leave the room. I say started, because Mr. Nidd did not go just at that moment, but stopped to take another look and mention the fact that he had an appointment with the President in Mr. Wontus's behalf.

"I pray you do not heed that cruel monster!" cried the lady, at the mention of Mr. Lincoln's name.

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Nidd, somewhat surprised.

"Oh, the untold misery, the cruelty, the treachery of that man!" cried the lady; "that heathen, which I can only liken unto a Vandal! The very mention of his name makes me shudder!" And she covered her face with her hands.

"Umph!" ejaculated Mr. Nidd. And then, after a moment's pause, he said, in a slow, earnest manner: "Madam,

until very recently I thought as you do. I had not seen the man, I did not know him. I had heard people speak of him as you have spoken of him, even in my own city; and I could agree with them then, but now I cannot. I have no desire to force an opinion upon you which may be distasteful to you, but it is a simple duty which I consider one owes to his fellow-man to speak of a man as you find him. Politically, I have opposed Abraham Lincoln; but if he were a candidate for the presidency to-morrow, I would vote for him. I have met him, and have seen with my own eyes that a nobler-hearted, more upright, Christian man never lived since the days of Washington. This I know, this I feel, and, madam, I stand by it. If you—even you—had seen what I have seen to-day, if you could have seen his patience and heard his kind words to people who come to him with the most trifling complaints, I am sure you would—every just and honorable person would—agree with me. I will keep my engagement." Having said this, Mr. Nidd did not wait for a reply, but walked quickly down the stairs.

At eight o'clock Mr. Nidd was at the presidential mansion. The night was cloudy, and the street lamps were just bright enough along the wide avenue to present everything in its gloomiest light. The doorkeeper had taken Mr. Nidd's card up, and the visitor threw himself into a chair, and was busy with his thoughts, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and the President stood before him. Mr. Nidd rose quickly, and grasping the extended hand, looked at him as though he were a spectre who had thus suddenly come upon him. Mr. Lincoln wore a slouch hat, well pulled down over his face, and a long surtout, which hung in loose folds about his slender person.

"Are you ready?" he asked, in a mild, quiet tone. "We have but little time, for I have an engagement with the Secretary of War at nine o'clock, which nothing short of death should defer."

Mr. Nidd signified that he was ready, and the two gentlemen started out together, and passed quietly through the grounds and into the street. As they walked along, Mr. Nidd looked at the tall form of the President, and tried to guess his thoughts. What were they? Perhaps with the army, which lies surrounding the States in rebellion; perhaps with some poor, unfortunate boy, whose ignorance of duty had brought

him to the verge of disgrace, perhaps death; perhaps with his own family and little ones; but surely not with himself.

"Are you not afraid, sir?" asked Mr. Nidd, as they walked along.

"Afraid!" echoed Mr. Lincoln. "Why should I be afraid? Surely, I have done no harm to any man."

"Yes, yes," cried Mr. Nidd. "But all the people of the whole South are your enemies, and there are also many in the North who hate you."

"My friend," said the President, moderating his gait and speaking earnestly, "I understand you; but that I am here with you is an evidence that I am not afraid. I have a deep and abiding faith in Him who doeth all things well. If I am to die, I stand ready at all times to obey His will. I would not voluntarily throw myself into danger, for I feel that I have a duty to perform before I shall be called away; and yet (his voice assumed a deeper tone as he spoke), could my poor life save the country in this hour of danger,—could it avert the misery which this terrible war must entail upon the people,—I would give it, not only willingly, but gladly. I have made every overture to the South that an honorable man could or the loyal people will allow; but they scoff at my best endeavors, and seek to destroy that which I have sworn to protect and preserve. No, no, my friend. I feel that I am entirely in the hands of my Maker, and I pray to Him to give me the strength and courage to do my duty. Yes, the day will come when I shall pass away; but when it does, believe me that I shall be prepared to bow in deep submission to Him who rules the high and low alike."

Mr. Nidd was deeply affected with the manner and language of the President, and nothing more was said until they arrived opposite the guard-house.

"I do not want to be known, if I can help it," said Mr. Lincoln, "and you must assist me in preserving my incog. Insist on seeing the officer of the guard, and then, if necessary,—if we cannot see your friend without,—I shall make myself known."

As they approached, an officer was standing in the doorway, who scrutinized them closely as they entered.

"You have a prisoner here by the name of Wontus?" said Mr. Nidd, approaching him. "I would like to see him."

"Impossible, sir, at this hour."

"Not for a moment?"

"Not for a second, sir."

"This gentleman is an attorney," said Mr. Nidd, pointing to the President. "Can't he be brought into the office for a moment?"

"I have no objections myself, gentlemen, but the orders are very strict, and I do not care to take the responsibility of breaking them."

"Would that all the officers were that way!" said Mr. Lincoln, in a whisper.

"Is the general here,—the military governor?" inquired Mr. Nidd.

"No, sir; he is at his room, I presume."

"Is there any one here who acts for him in his absence?" asked Nidd.

"The Officer of the Day—that gentleman there—does so occasionally." And he pointed to an officer who, at that moment, was passing along the hall.

Mr. Nidd attacked this officer immediately, and with strong pleading at length induced him to have Mr. Wontus brought to the office. When he came in he looked bad, very bad. His eyes were swollen and red, his unkempt hair fell in tangled masses about his face, and he was but a wreck of the jolly, good-natured Wontus. There wasn't spirit enough in him to greet Mr. Nidd, and it was only by dint of persuasion that he was induced to sit down and be composed.

The President soon took a seat by his side, and as they were alone in the room, except the guard, he commenced a conversation with Mr. Wontus, following about the same line that an honest attorney would before accepting a retainer. He inquired fully into Mr. Wontus's aims and intentions, and then offered his services as a volunteer counsel. To this Mr. Wontus would not agree; he had done nothing, and he would rather languish in prison all his life than make an effort to clear himself of a charge which had no foundation, and thereby give color to the proceedings. At the end of the conversation Mr. Lincoln took Nidd aside, and informed him that he believed his friend to be unquestionably guiltless, and that he should be instantly liberated.

"Good-by, sir," said the President, taking Mr. Wontus's

fevered, trembling hands in his and looking at him with sympathy beaming in his eye. "I think I can satisfy the Secretary of War of your innocence, although he has the reputation of being a cold man; and if I am successful, you will be liberated in a few minutes. Good-by, sir," he repeated. "Your friend must fetch you to see me." And saying this he walked out of the room.

Ten minutes had passed since he left, and yet no word. Mr. Nidd was becoming nervous; Mr. Wontus was resigned. The guard had twice suggested that Mr. Wontus ought to return to the "parlor"; but Nidd begged but a minute more time, and he sat listening for the footsteps of the messenger.

"He comes!" cried Nidd, as voices were heard in the hall. The sound of voices was soon followed by the officer, accompanied by a soldier in undress uniform, and stepping up to the light, the officer read a paper which had just been presented to him. "You are free to depart, sir," said he, turning to Mr. Wontus. But the words had scarcely died upon his lips when Mr. Wontus swooned away. With Nidd the good news had quite a different effect. He at once became very affectionate, and, besides doing very many other strange things, insisted on embracing the messenger from the Secretary of War, which kindness was respectfully but positively declined. Leaving the officer to attend to Mr. Wontus, Mr. Nidd rushed out, and in a few moments returned with a carriage. He found Mr. Wontus entirely recovered from his swoon, and scarcely taking time to thank the officer for his services in the premises, he escorted his friend to the vehicle, and was soon rattling down the avenue toward his lodgings.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOMEWHAT PHILOSOPHICAL—WONTUS AND NIDD VISIT THE PRESIDENT AND MAKE SOME EXPLANATIONS.

MEN who are always precisely in the same mood or humor are so exceedingly rare that I have often wondered, and so have others, I presume, when reading works of fiction, whether the writers had drawn their characters from real life, or whether their existence was merely the fanciful picture of the brain. Of course there are always particular veins of character which stand out more prominently than others, and which may, and no doubt do, cling to people almost from the cradle to the grave; but to see a man or woman who is the same at all times and under all circumstances is really something extraordinary. Mr. Nidd probably came nearer the stereotyped individual than any of the other members of the corps, and yet I have seen him, too, change in many things. In Mr. Wontus, none who know him well, since he set out on his travels, look for much stability of temper, because it is well known that his disposition is such that he can be easily impressed, and be very ardent in whatever direction his mind turns. He lives in the present, and looks only at the bright side of the future and the past. Being of this nature, he no sooner found himself once more in the enjoyment of his liberty than he forgot his recent misery, and was willing to look over it, and even forget those who had inflicted it on him. Not so with Mr. Nidd. That gentleman insisted on having the landlady arrested and made to pay for the trouble she had caused, and he would probably have attended to the matter himself had it not been that Mr. Wontus expressly forbid anything of the kind.

Once in the house, Mr. Wontus received the congratulations of the corps. Mr. Thomson was affected to tears, while Mr. Wilkins's countenance lit up with a conscious importance of the prominent part he had played in the affair, for it should be understood that that gentleman had come to believe that he had been instrumental, in some way or another, in securing

the release of Mr. Wontus. But Mr. Wontus was too much fatigued to either listen to or indulge in much conversation, and after a complete change of attire he retired to bed, and dreamed that the corps was a huge chain of iron, whose links were welded together with a fire of the strongest love. Notwithstanding the hardness of the material used in creating this vision in his sleep, Mr. Wontus's rest was soft and peaceful, and the morning found him a rejuvenated man. His first business, and, in fact, only business, after breakfast was to dispatch Thomas Thomson to the room of Mrs. Catherine Flick, to know whether she would receive him. During Tommy's absence, Mr. Nidd gave Mr. Wontus a full and graphic description of his interview with the President, and the part Mr. Lincoln had taken in his release.

"And that was his hand—the President's hand—that I grasped last night!" cried Mr. Wontus. "God bless him! I will go to see him,—we will *all* go to see him, and I will thank him. What wouldn't I do for such a man! (A pause.) And that was the President, Abraham Lincoln,—Abraham the just!" As he spoke a most happy smile played over his face, and he went on echoing the President's name until his soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Tommy, who informed him that the lady was glad to hear of his safe return, and would be pleased to see him.

A single man, with a fair amount of learning, is generally one of two things in the presence of ladies,—either very much of a lamb or very much of a lion. Mr. Wontus was always the former. He felt that this was awkward and unbecoming, and he had often endeavored to strike what is called a happy medium, but he was never successful, and like most men similarly situated, he thought on more than one occasion that he did not care for ladies' society in the least. Facts spoke differently.

He had dashed up the stairs very much as a man would dash who had a perfect right to dash anywhere, and it was not until he had knocked at Mrs. Flick's door that he bethought himself of his situation. Before the other members of the party, particularly Nidd, knew of his acquaintance with the lady, he had felt comparatively at ease, but now he was sure that all eyes were upon him, and he felt correspondingly uncomfortable. It was with an effort that he succeeded in

answering to the summons to "come in," by going in. Once inside, and in the presence of the lady for whom he now had a new and sudden and most unconquerable respect, he stammered out an apology for presenting himself thus early in the morning, but laid it to a desire to see the little one. It was a happy idea, and he thought so, as he expressed it in language, and at once set about an extravagant hugging and kissing of the child. Absence of a few hours had made him almost a stranger again. He looked as though he would like to cease hugging the child long before he did cease, but he was at a loss what else to do; open the conversation he could not, and he was only prevented from smothering the child entirely by the mother expressing her sympathy for him in his late troubles. He was about to say in reply that he was very happy to have undergone the trouble, when it struck him that that would not be exactly the thing, so he said nothing. He talked that particular language which most people have an idea is necessary on such occasions, and which I may be excused for calling "lingo," to the child, but as the little cherub could make no intelligible reply to his many expressions of love, admiration, and so forth, he soon relapsed into a silence quite expressive.

I have never been able exactly to understand why it is that women are braver in their conversation among men than men are among women, but it has often occurred to me that such was a fact. Now, whether this condition of things comes from an innate innocence, and hence confidence, on the part of womankind, or is due to her great reputation for conversational powers, is something beyond the scope of my philosophy. Even commonplace observers cannot fail to have noticed that when a young woman or a middle-aged woman and a young man or a middle-aged man are thrown together, that the young woman generally not only leads the conversation, but does a greater part of it. Of course there are exceptions to the rule, but they are few. I am unable to say whether women notice this fact and indulge themselves accordingly, or whether it is a part and parcel of their sweet natures. I am inclined to think, however, that they do notice it, and these thoughts are in a manner verified by the fact that Mrs. Flick, without appearing to notice Mr. Wontus's bashfulness, carried on such a stream of conversation that the gentleman finally found courage

enough to put the child on the floor and participate in the conversation. An honorable, I may say a charitable, motive prevented Mr. Wontus from mentioning that he knew of a gentleman by the name of Flick, or even hinting at such a thing. He knew that the lady was in trouble, and notwithstanding her disloyal proclivities, the natural goodness of his heart would not permit him to heap more trouble upon her by the mention of anything, either in connection with his own arrest or anything else, that would be calculated to disturb her mind. He even took pains to direct the conversation so that it might steer clear of the war, and in this manner succeeded in passing a couple of hours very agreeably in the company of the invalid.

It would be impossible to relate all that Mr. Wontus said on this occasion, or all that was said by the other party; yet I am sure that nothing but pure sympathetic friendship found a place in the conversation. Mr. Wontus was loath to leave the invalid in her present condition in the city, more particularly when he recollected the spleen of the landlady; but how to make her situation more comfortable, or in fact to assist her at all, was a matter which weighed very heavily upon his mind, but found no vent in words.

When the moment came for him to make his exit he spoke feelingly of the fact that it would be necessary for his party and himself to leave the city in a short time,—perhaps a day or two. As he spoke the chubby hands of the child were extended toward him, and the beautiful eyes of the mother looked what she would speak. It shook his determination, and at that moment Mr. Wontus was inclined to take back all he had said, and remain. But he had taken Nidd from his business, and had made up his own mind to see the war, and he held back the words. It was a very awkward thing for Mr. Wontus to get out of the room; but he did it, his bashfulness being indexed by the color of his face. Once out he made his way down-stairs, and after a talk with Mr. Nidd in regard to future movements, it was decided that there was no time to lose if the corps desired to see anything of the grand military movements so mysteriously hinted at by the newspapers. As Mr. Wontus would not hear of returning to Philadelphia, and Mr. Nidd had no particular fancy for or attraction in Washington, it was soon arranged that the corps

should commence a movement of some kind as early as practicable. With this view Mr. Wilkins was directed to notify the landlady of the corps' intention to vacate the premises, and to secure the necessary outfit for field service. This being done, it now occurred that recent orders made it necessary for civilians visiting the army to have special permission to do so, duly signed, sealed, and delivered by an officer appointed for that purpose. Wontus was in a dilemma; he wanted to be with the soldiers, not merely out of curiosity, for his faith in them was still unshaken, but he believed that he could be useful to them, if not to the cause. How to secure the permission was a question the perplexedness of which was put to flight by Nidd's proposing a call on the President, who he was sure would do anything for them within the bounds of his duty.

The morning was clear and beautiful, though warm, and as Wontus and Nidd took their course along the very route pursued by the guard who had conveyed Mr. Wontus to prison, that gentleman remarked the difference in his feelings, and for the first time noticed that his foot was no longer ailing, but had completely convalesced under the pressure of excitement and a most rigorous diet. Mr. Nidd had very little to say; but as there was nothing remarkable about that, Mr. Wontus walked by his side and endeavored to keep down the image of the invalid, which would persist in finding a place in everything he looked at or thought of. He did not know that this was wrong, but he thought perhaps it might be, for as yet he did not know but that the Major Flick whom he had met in Philadelphia might be some other Flick than the husband of Mrs. Catherine Flick, the invalid; and yet he was inclined to believe that the husband of Mrs. Flick and Major Flick, of the secret service, were identical. It is pleasing to notice a man who has great interest in his fellow-man, but who never allows that interest to assume the shape of curiosity. That Mr. Nidd had an abiding interest in Mr. Wontus, his actions —and they spoke much louder and plainer than words—could testify, and yet up to this moment he had never allowed himself to ask of Mr. Wontus a share in his confidence. Mr. Wontus thought of this; and the fact that his confidence was unasked, together with his want of knowledge how to proceed, induced him to open his heart to his friend.

"Nidd," said he, as they passed along through the crowds of idlers in front of the post-office, "do you know Mrs. Flick?"

"Know the major," replied Nidd, dryly.

Mr. Wontus faltered. He scarcely knew how to reach the point.

"I mean the sick lady."

"I've seen her."

"Don't you think she is a very fine woman?"

"Very fine. Devilish bitter rebel, though. Hates Lincoln worse than poison."

"Brought up that way,—hates you and me, because we're Yankees," said Mr. Wontus, laconically, casting a side glance at Mr. Nidd.

Nidd looked incredulous, shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

"Fine child," remarked Mr. Wontus.

"Very."

The gentlemen were evidently fencing, and were guarded in their movements. There was silence for a time.

"I'm very much interested in that woman," remarked Mr. Wontus.

"So I perceive," replied Nidd.

"I feel very sorry for her; she is poor, friendless, and in a helpless condition."

"She's a rebel; a bitter, unrelenting rebel; one who would do damage if in her power——"

"But it's not in her power," interrupted Mr. Wontus. "I know that she is a rebel; but, Nidd, she's in trouble. If we knew nothing about it it would make no difference; but, since we do know about it, I want to know if it isn't our duty to assist her?"

Mr. Nidd was silent. There was evidently something more than a mere desire to help an unfortunate woman, although he felt confident that Mr. Wontus did not let any other reason find a place in his thoughts.

"You're narrow-minded," continued Mr. Wontus, as they turned from F Street into the avenue.

"I've been thinking," said Nidd, after a time, "that it would be more proper for a man imbued with the principles that you are, being in favor of waging a war of comparative extermination, to find widows and orphans of your own way of thinking,

who richly deserve—as the world goes—all the charity you have to spare."

Mr. Wontus halted for a moment, and laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, remarked:

"Nidd, whether it is a virtue or a sin for me to be charitable toward all in misfortune is a matter which needs no argument. I am in favor of a war of extermination; a war that shall forever put to rest and bury in a grave so deep that the sound of Gabriel's bugle shall never awaken it to life again, the pernicious, the hellish, ideas of those men who would destroy such a government and such a country as this, that their own ambitious aims might be gratified, and that an aristocracy might be reared among us whose very nature would compel it to drift into such a condition of selfishness as would make our country a monarchy, whose chief pillar would be the institution of slavery. I would spare the innocent victims of these men's delusive powers, Nidd, but I should never cease to teach them that love of country which in itself would guarantee her their support. There is where my extermination begins; there is where it ends. Now for the widows and orphans of my way of thinking. Oh, I know; I cannot shut my eyes to the knowledge that there are now, and will be in the future, countless households rendered sad and desolate which need the sympathy and support of the rich and happy. How many of these poor people I have aided you are somewhat aware of; if there are more who are suffering that you know of, why not tell me, and I will do unto them what I have done unto others."

"I ask your pardon, Wontus!" cried Mr. Nidd, with more feeling than was usual, "I ask your pardon!" And the two gentlemen grasped each other's hands and were understood.

"Now, what I want to get at," said Mr. Wontus, blowing his nose vigorously, "is to know how I can take care—have some watch over this woman during our absence."

"Suppose we submit it to Mr. Lincoln; he is not the man to turn a deaf ear to such a case."

"But think of her political principles!" cried Mr. Wontus, in alarm; "why, he would have her arrested at once."

"She'd be well taken care of then," remarked Nidd, sharply.

Mr. Wontus was horrified at the thought, and mentioned her hate of the President. To this Nidd replied that Mr. Lincoln, he guessed, was accustomed to such things, and he

did not think that that would deter him from doing an act of kindness. And by the time the gentlemen reached the executive mansion, it was settled that Mr. Lincoln should be made aware of the case and his advice followed, provided that Mr. Wontus would not be called on to countenance or do anything that his conscience or his feelings did not approve of.

It was now high noon, and, as the gentlemen entered, they were informed that the hour for visitors to see the President had passed. Mr. Wontus's face became a blank, but Mr. Nidd, with the air of a man who feels that his knowledge is a little greater than those about him, drew a card from his pocket, on which he wrote his name, and, handing it to an orderly, asked that it be given to the President. The man had started, but Mr. Nidd hurriedly called him back, and taking the card, wrote the word "Important!" across its face. There were other people standing about, hoping that accident would give them the opportunity of seeing the President, and as Mr. Nidd handed the card to the orderly again he remarked, in his decided way, "I guess that will fetch him." He was right, for in a few moments the orderly returned, and Nidd and Wontus were ushered into the little reception-room.

The President was lying on a lounge, one hand shading his eyes and the other hanging idly by his side.

"Be seated, gentlemen, and excuse me. I have had a very hard day of it, and begin to feel exhausted." He spoke in a weary, but friendly way. "I had made up my mind to see no more people to-day, but observing that your card was marked 'important,' I sent for you to come in." As the President spoke Nidd cast a glance on Wontus, which was understood to mean "I told you so," and Mr. Wontus returned the glance with a nod of approval.

"You are the gentleman for whom I could do nothing," said Mr. Lincoln, rising to a sitting posture and smiling at Nidd. "You've changed your mind again, eh?"

Mr. Nidd suddenly discovered a loose piece of leather on the heel of his boot, which he found it necessary to tear off at that particular moment; and Mr. Wontus came to the rescue with a multitude of thanks for his liberty, and, without a pause to show where the connection was broken, immediately commenced with the subject nearest his heart,—the care of the invalid. Now Mr. Nidd had had this matter all diplo-

matically arranged in his mind, but before he had an opportunity to broach the subject Mr. Wontus had launched himself into it, and, to all intents and purposes, was oblivious to everything else. With Mr. Nidd the most important object of this visit was the securing of the authority which gave the party leave to visit the army, and out of this fact there grew a scene.

"You see, sir," said Mr. Wontus, in a very confidential manner, "it will be necessary for somebody here to have an acquaintance with us, so that everything will be properly understood."

"Certainly," cried Mr. Nidd.

"I don't know that it would be necessary to have anything in writing," continued Mr. Wontus.

"It *must* be in writing, or printed," exclaimed Mr. Nidd.

Wontus cast a deprecatory glance at Mr. Nidd, and continued: "You see, Mr. Lincoln, my friend and I have different views on the subject, and we've agreed to leave the matter to you."

"But, Wontus," cried Mr. Nidd, "we must have writing,—something to show,—in case it is demanded."

"Demanded!" echoed Mr. Wontus. "Demanded! Why, Mr. Nidd, you astonish me!" (Turning to the President:) "Excuse me, Mr. President; perhaps we are worrying you."

"Never mind me, gentlemen," said the President, opening a packet of papers just put into his hands.

"Well, see here," said Mr. Nidd, in a manner which looked as though he intended to clinch the subject. "Suppose we go from here without the papers to show that everything is right,—what then?"

"Why, who knows anything about it except the landlady?" cried Mr. Wontus, who noticed Mr. Nidd's manner more than he did his words.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Nidd. "Why, my friend, you don't understand."

"The woman did me harm," cried Wontus, "but I forgave her, and only hope she may be as freely forgiven hereafter as I forgive her now."

"My friends," said Mr. Lincoln, in that usual quiet, droll way of his, "you are talking to cross purposes. Neither of you appear to understand the other. Now let me unravel the knot. *You* want authority to visit the army?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Nidd, who was the party addressed.

"You want the same thing?" said he, turning to Mr. Wontus. "Stop one moment, please!" as Mr. Wontus was about to reply. "You want something additional; and while you have not exactly said what that something additional was, yet, from what I can see of it, there is at least one woman in it; perhaps more."

Mr. Nidd looked incredulous. Mr. Wontus was abashed.

"Now, gentlemen," continued the President, without waiting for a reply, "I suppose I ought to be very dignified; and so I am, I hope, sometimes. But God made man, and man made dignity; and fashion has made dignity to be more like a suit of clothes,—to be put on and taken off at pleasure. But no matter about that now. It crossed my mind on reading one of these papers, and I mentioned it. Let me ask the questions which I think you gentlemen want answered, and in that way I think we shall make better progress. Suppose we consider the leave to visit the army first."

The gentlemen both nodded.

"Well, I fear it can't be granted."

Wontus and Nidd exchanged glances.

"The commander of the army complains of the number of citizens who are allowed within the lines, and, for myself, I do not like to break in upon any rules he may establish." Mr. Wontus's face wore a look of deep concern, and Mr. Nidd appeared to be preparing for an argument, when the President resumed: "The best I can do for you is to give you a note to the general, and if he permits you there will be no complaint from me. One moment," said he, observing that both the gentlemen were about to speak: "this is the best I can do; and I assure you that I would not do that much were I not thoroughly convinced of your loyalty and good intentions." He turned to the desk and at once wrote a few lines, which he inclosed and handed to Nidd.

"Now, my friend," said he, smilingly, laying his hand on Mr. Wontus's knee, "you want something, and you don't exactly know what."

"He," interrupted Nidd, looking up from the note just handed him by the President,—"he would——"

Mr. Wontus took hold of the extreme end of Nidd's coat-tail and gave it two or three vigorous pulls. The pulls were

understood, and Mr. Nidd at once became as silent as an oyster, while our hero gave Mr. Lincoln a clear and succinct account of his acquaintance with the invalid, beginning with his accidental visit to her room at the request of the landlady. He gave full particulars concerning her disloyalty and hatred of himself, and brought his statement to a close by setting forth the woman's impoverished condition in such a pathetic manner as not only to bring tears to his own eyes, but to cause the President to have a sudden desire to look for certain papers in places where he least expected to find them.

"And you want me to tell you what to do?" asked Mr. Lincoln, who had not been successful in finding the papers. "What do you propose to do?"

Said Mr. Wontus, "I propose to devise some means by which this lady may be enabled to live comfortably until such time as she is able to labor for herself, and to do this I am willing to contribute a small sum of money; but, as I do not wish to wound her feelings by handing it to her, why I wish to secure the services of somebody who will see to her without being seen himself."

"A woman of delicate sensibilities," said Mr. Nidd, in a deprecatory manner.

"Have you no friends here to whom you could give this important trust?" asked the President, with interest manifested in his manner.

"What do you think of my plan?" asked Mr. Wontus, proudly.

"Very good, very good; but how am I to help you? If you only knew some trustworthy man——"

"I do!" cried Mr. Wontus, rising to his feet; "Moxley! eh, Nidd?"

"Don't know him," said Mr. Nidd. "Heard of him; that's all."

"This is a gentleman who is an employee in one of the departments here," said Mr. Wontus, turning to the President. "I knew him in New York before the war. A very good man, I'm sure."

"You do not know which one of the departments he is in?" asked the President, tapping a bell.

"No."

A man entered the room, to whom Mr. Lincoln gave some

directions concerning the finding of Mr. Moxley; and turning to Mr. Wontus, he informed him that he would send him to his lodgings the moment he could be found, and that it was settled that, if Mr. Wontus was satisfied with the arrangements, the President would do all in his power to forward them; and soon after the gentlemen prepared to take their departure.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH THE CORPS GETS READY FOR FIELD SERVICE, AND BIDS ADIEU TO WASHINGTON—MR. THOMSON MEETS SOME OLD FRIENDS, AND NIDD IS MADE HAPPY.

THE world has probably never produced a man with more gentleness of nature, goodness of heart, and lack of egotism, than Abraham Lincoln. Without those assumed, and hence false,—for no man is born with them,—imperial mannerisms which fasten themselves to some men the moment they don the robes of authority or assume a more elevated position in the scale of wealth, there was nothing about him calculated to repel the poorest and most humble of his race. On the other hand, perfectly natural, unostentatious in his manners, there was a degree of that peculiar magnetism about him at all times which, while it attracted and charmed those who came in contact with him, never gave, even to the unlettered, that license for assurance which men who lack understanding so frequently indulge in when treated as equals. Nor did he ever set himself up as the judge of his fellow-men's social status. He believed with Chalmers that "true greatness lies wholly in force of soul," and he exemplified his belief by his conduct. To the high and low, rich and poor, he was alike the kind and courteous gentleman, and the veriest aristocrat of foreign or native manufacture found him the same as the simple-minded and unsophisticated plebeian. Ever ready to assist the troubled and unfortunate, with a mind that had "charity for all and malice toward none," he was approached by men of all conditions and complexions, and more than one heart that was clouded and sad had a bright and pleasant sun-

beam thrown upon it by the kind words and sympathetic acts of Abraham Lincoln.

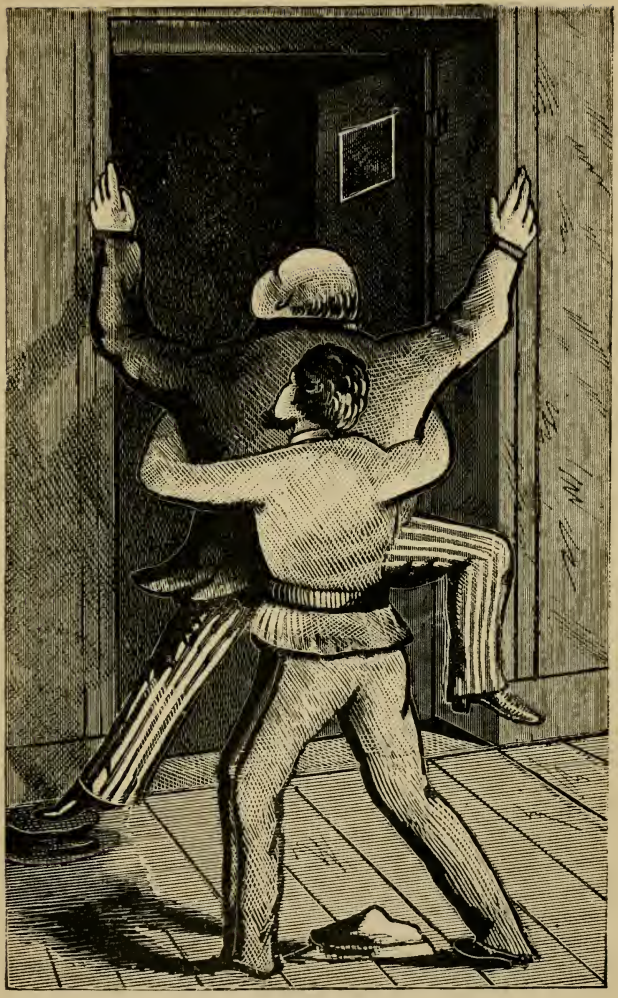
As the gentlemen moved across the room toward the door, the President arose, and walking by the side of Mr. Wontus, slipped a bank-bill into his hand, and in a whisper said, "I believe in you, sir; I am glad I have had the pleasure of seeing and knowing you; put this to whatever good use you see proper." And as he spoke he pressed Mr. Wontus's hand, and before that gentleman had time to reply the President had turned to Mr. Nidd, and was directing him where and how to proceed in securing the permit. For a moment Mr. Wontus was in doubt what course to pursue. "I am richer, —have more money than he has, and not one-tenth of the expenses; I will give it back." But Mr. Wontus did not have the opportunity to carry out his resolve, for the President managed to keep aloof from him and to effectually prevent the conversation turning in that direction.

"Good-by, gentlemen," said the President, cheerfully, as he extended his hand; "I hope you may not only have a pleasant journey and a safe return, but that you may succeed in doing something to alleviate the sufferings of those poor fellows who are giving up their lives that their country may live." His face assumed its wonted grave and serious look as he spoke, and the visitors departed deeply impressed.

"A great and good man," said Mr. Wontus.

Mr. Nidd hung his head as though in deep thought, but said nothing, and the gentlemen passed on to their lodgings, to prepare for their departure.

The outfit of a soldier on a peace footing differs very materially from the outfit of the same sort of an individual on a war footing. As Mr. Wilkins has given ample, I may say profuse, oral evidence of his vast army experience, it is fair to presume that some part of his time—in all the years that he served—must have been whiled away during a time of peace, or at least there must have been a brief cessation of hostilities sometime, somewhere, somehow; and during those moments, I repeat that it is fair to presume that a man of his intelligence ought to be able to note the difference between an outfit for the field and one for garrison duty. I do not desire to impeach Mr. Wilkins, or doubt his word in the slightest particular; but I do wish to say that when he executed Mr.



WONTUS DECLINES TO BE PUT IN THE GUARD-HOUSE.

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Wontus's order to procure a proper outfit for the party, that I think that it is at least probable that he exceeded Mr. Wontus's wishes, if nothing more. True, he had no special orders to procure any special articles. Mr. Wontus considered that special directions to a "man of the world," and a tried and experienced soldier, like Mr. Wilkins, would be simply superfluous, and further, would show a lack of confidence, which he certainly did not feel. The order, therefore, was *carte blanche*, and Mr. Wilkins proceeded to fill it as he thought proper.

On such an important occasion as the filling of this order, Mr. Wilkins found it utterly impossible to be alone, and consequently the aid of a congenial companion was enlisted. To undertake to describe the mystery and importance which Mr. Wilkins threw around and attached to the duty during his conversations at the hotels and elsewhere, would be a task far beyond the scope of a pen not gifted with almost supernatural powers, and I forbear, with the simple statement that it was immense. When he walked into a shop, it was done with the air of a man who intended purchasing the whole establishment at the owner's first price, and without question. His manner was slow and stately, and his voice, as he rejected article after article, assumed a sepulchral tone. When he referred anything to his companion for *his* judgment, it was done in such a manner as to be very impressive; not that the gentleman's opinion amounted to anything with Mr. Wilkins, for his purchases were generally directly opposite to the advice of the aforesaid; but still he asked his opinion, and that was doing a great deal for so humble a follower, and Mr. Wilkins felt it.

If time was made for slaves, then it is safe to say that Mr. Wilkins was no slave, for it was not until the slant rays of the sun fell on both sides of the slant streets of the capital, that he completed his purchases. He had made it a rule early in the day that the purchase of an article entitled him to a treat at the expense of the seller, hence it was dark when he presented himself and the following schedule of articles purchased for the corps. It was written on a sheet of foolscap, and was headed:

CAMP AND GARRISON EQUIPAGE OF THE WONTUS CORPS OF OBSERVATION—INVENTORY.

Two double bedsteads (cottage style).
Blankets and bedding for do.

One wash-stand, with service complete (cottage style).
Three tents (two large and one small).
One roll of oil-cloth.
Two door-mats.
One warming-pan.
One mess-chest.
One set china (ornamented).
Two baskets (market).
Four large bowie-knives.
do do horse-pistols.
Pans, pots, kettles.
Demijohns, decanters.
Etcetera.

The lights were burning when Mr. Wilkins presented himself and the schedule to the party at their quarters. The spirits he had partaken of had lent wings to his usually fruitful imagination, and he set forth the virtues of his different purchases, made with an eye single to comfort and convenience, so temptingly, that Thomas Thomson was in ecstacies; Mr. Wontus signified his willingness to pay the bill, and Mr. Nidd gave a silent acquiescence to the whole arrangement.

Mr. Wontus did not pay much attention to the reading of the schedule, because, first, he believed that just such things would be necessary, and second, because his mind was more concentrated on another subject. With Mr. Thomson, however, there was a degree of inquisitiveness manifested which Wilkins found necessary to set at rest before dismissing the subject, and he proceeded to do it in this wise:

"Them bedsteads," said he, with his finger on the paper, "are for the comfort of the members of the corps after a march. The blankets ditto, ditto, which means the same. The wash-stand must be for the colonel and Niddy's tent,—give 'em character and standin'. The two big tents are for the corps; the little tent is for the cook, for it would be degradin' for the members of the corps to do their own cookin'. The oil-cloth is an indispensable article of furniture, and goes in the colonel's tent. The door-mat is to notify visitors that the party is clean in their habits, and others is expected for to be the same. The warm'n-pan is partic'lary necessary, as it gives style to the looks of things, and to warm the beds and dry 'em after a shower, which, as soldiers, we must be expectin' as we go along.

The mess-chest is a soldier's contraption, and couldn't be done without, nohow. China is useful, and looks well. You know what baskets are for. The knives and pistols are for the safety and protection of the corps in the hour of danger, which must be encountered in the reg'lar course of events which transpire in the field of gory blood (Mr. Wilkins waved his hand tragically). The pans, pots, and demijohns—well, you know what they're for."

He ceased speaking, and would have turned away, but Thomas Thomson had noticed that there was still an article on the list which Wilkins had not noticed, so he called his attention to the fact, and insisted on being enlightened. Mr. Wilkins cast his eye toward Wontus and Nidd, and seeing that they were engaged in some matter of their own, he assumed a serious manner, and, placing his finger on the word *etcetera*, said:

"Mr. Thomson, it appears to me that you ain't very well learned in your general education. The word which you see there comes most frequent in conversation when men have a great deal to say and don't know how to say it. It's a foreigner which has been naturalized into our language, and comes mostly from its root, as I have been informed, which means many things not hereinbefore mentioned, as it was; therefore, you see, it means here as if it was not here at all, but as if somethin' else took its place; and, consequently, it is generally put at the conclusion of a number of things not mentioned, as in the case now before us." As Mr. Wilkins concluded, he drew a long breath to fill the vacuum caused by expressing the rather lengthy sentence, and then turned to Tommy and remarked, "Don't you see?"

Tommy scrutinized the word as it was written on the paper before him as though he expected the word itself to throw some light on the subject, scratched his head, and then remarked that he *did* see. This being the desired result, the conversation turned upon other subjects, and soon after the gentlemen retired.

The next day Mr. Nidd proceeded to secure the necessary papers to enable the corps to visit the army, and Mr. Moxley waited on Wontus, and was introduced to the invalid. In brief, the arrangements were all satisfactorily made, and the party was ready for the forward movement.

A great part of the army had departed for Fortress Mon-

roe. General McClellan would leave for the scene of operations on the morrow, and with all the necessary details attended to, including the "camp and garrison equipage," the corps was ready to follow the little hero the next day. It was found impossible to secure transportation from Washington, and it therefore became necessary for the gentlemen to proceed to Baltimore, and reach the scene of operations by way of the bay steamers; at least, this was the programme laid out by Mr. Nidd after his return from the War Department. The party would leave the next morning early, and, without a word to anybody, Mr. Wontus sent for the landlady's bill and paid it. He harbored no enmity, and would leave in peace. But there was one duty yet to be attended to.

We are entirely conversant with the fact that Mr. Wontus found it a rather difficult and embarrassing task to present himself to the invalid at any time; but now that he was going away, and perhaps forever, his frame of mind was rather more distressing than otherwise. Up to this time the invalid had never expressed a word indicative of more than a high regard and deep appreciation of the gentleman, and Mr. Wontus had forced himself to think—well, no, not exactly think, either, but, more properly, to believe—that *his* regard for the lady, notwithstanding her disloyal proclivities and condemnation of those he loved, was simply such a feeling as any other woman might stir up in his bosom under similar circumstances. I say he had forced himself to believe this, and the reason why I say it is because his actions resembled so strongly those of a man who is deeply, darkly, and strangely in love. He wished to see her, and yet he feared the interview; and in this condition he did many strange things, which excited the curiosity of Mr. Nidd, and caused that gentleman to tell Mr. Wontus that he resembled a boy who was experiencing his first love. But a word was needed, and with the quickness that a shot will roll off a shovel, the senior member proceeded up-stairs. He had been expected; and, although Mrs. Battadore had done just as little as was possible, yet the apartment and its occupants presented rather a better appearance than was usual.

During the interview, which was rather protracted, Mr. Wontus was about as ignorant of the past, present, and the future as any man well could be, and his modesty would not

allow him to do more than to hint, in a very obscure way, that the invalid should not trouble herself, but should take courage, and do her best to convalesce speedily; also, that Mr. Moxley lived in the immediate neighborhood, and would be pleased to render her assistance at any moment if she would call on him; at the same time he hinted that her friends had been communicated with in some mysterious manner, and that her wants would be attended to. The return for all this kindness of Mr. Wontus was most profuse thanks on the part of the invalid. The gentleman could stand almost anything better than thanks, and, as he rose to depart, his old agitation returned, and, fearing that he was about to make a scene, he bade a hasty adieu, and dashed out of the room.

The others had retired when Mr. Wontus reached his room, and noiselessly he mixed himself a decoction of brandy, water, and sugar, and sat down to reflect. His reflections were numerous and strangely mixed, and it was only after he had indulged in more brandy, water, and sugar that "nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," came to relieve his troubled mind of the pressure.

It was very near the last day of April or the first day of May, but exactly which I am unable to say just now, for each day of the week and of the month so closely resembled the other in scenes and events that there was nothing by which to mark the march of time, that Thomas Thomson rose with the sun, and soon after called up the other members. Everything had been attended to, and the moment that breakfast was finished the party proceeded to the depot, and took their last survey of the Capitol. With Wilkins and Thomson the idea of a change was refreshing, and these two gentlemen were in high good humor, and, to their credit be it said, were also sober. With Nidd there was nothing particularly noticeable. His face bore the same imperturable, grave appearance, and he moved about with the same firm stride and elevated head. Wontus's face wore a mingled look of sorrow and pleasure: a soft smile played about his mouth, but sorrow looked forth from his eyes. He moved about in a mechanical way, and it was not until he took his seat in the cars that he ventured a remark.

"Is everything all right?" he asked of Mr. Nidd.

"To the best of my knowledge and belief, it is," said Mr. Nidd, dryly.

It is reasonable to suppose that more would have been said, but two things occurred which prevented: one was the starting of the train, and the other was the presence of Mr. Wilkins. This gentleman had taken charge of the hand baggage of the corps, and ensconced himself in the centre of the car, and at the moment he presented himself to Mr. Wontus, resembled a man who had traveled all his life, and knew just exactly how it should be done. His hat was pulled firmly down over his head, almost to his ears, and a handkerchief, which had one day been white, was folded carefully about his neck.

"Mr. Wontus!" he cried, as he leaned over that gentleman's seat, and supported himself by its back. Mr. Wontus looked up.

"I've——." Further remarks were lost in the clatter of the wheels and the sudden backing of the speaker, caused by the train moving around a curve.

"What did you say?" yelled Mr. Wontus, with his hand at his ear to catch the reply.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! went the wheels. Skruge, bang! went the couplings. Whew, whew, whew! screamed the whistle, and the cars rocked and swayed as only cars can rock and sway.

Mr. Wilkins held firmly to the seat, and Mr. Wontus looked into his face in expectation of what was to come.

A conversation held in the cars is never a very agreeable one, but it is particularly trying and vexatious when the car is an old one, the track a rough one, and the train bounding along at what is very properly called break-neck speed. This was exactly the sort of a train that the party had taken passage on, and when Mr. Wilkins succeeded in assuming an upright position, and a moment afterward was cast headlong across Mr. Nidd's legs, nobody was particularly astonished, except the two gentlemen most concerned. Whether Mr. Nidd considered the unceremonious conduct of Mr. Wilkins intentional or not I cannot say, but I am enabled to relate that which immediately followed, to wit: After the first shock Mr. Nidd's face wore a really savage expression, and as the prostrate form of Wilkins lay across his knees, his mind may have wandered back to the moment wherein the man who was now so completely in his power had used his name in a rather unwarrant-

able way; at any rate, he no sooner noticed who the party was, than he seized him by the neck, and before Mr. Wontus could interfere, commenced exercising his fist on the party's head, neck, and back, very much after the same fashion that he would have exercised it on the drum in an accompaniment to a wonderfully quick march. Mr. Wilkins was no passive party to all this, but displayed his interest in the affair by shouting and kicking to an extent truly wonderful. The more he kicked the more Mr. Nidd thumped, until at length the friendly arms of Mr. Wontus interfered, and Mr. Wilkins was allowed to gather himself up from the floor, where he had cast himself the moment Mr. Nidd relaxed his muscular exercise.

It was a relief to everybody to get out of the car at Baltimore; and, leaving Mr. Wilkins to attend to the transportation of the baggage, the other gentlemen proceeded at once to the steamboat, which left for Fortress Monroe in the evening. There was plenty of time; and after the tickets and the necessary military passes had been secured, and the luggage stacked away, Mr. Wontus gave notice that each and every member of the corps was at liberty to do as he pleased until five o'clock, at which hour the boat would leave her moorings.

Wontus and Nidd declared their intention to remain on the boat, but Wilkins and Thomson concluded to do otherwise, and accordingly made their way toward the Canton-street railroad depot. Mr. Thomson's conduct while in Washington had been of such an exemplary character that he had not only husbanded his own resources, but had also won numerous small rewards from his employer, and hence to-day, in the parlance of the times, he was pretty well "fixed," which, when explained, means that he had a fair amount of money. Pecuniarily, Mr. Wilkins was not "fixed" at all, but as that was a matter which seldom disturbed him so long as his companions were, Mr. Wilkins went along quite gleefully, first borrowing and treating, and then changing the condition of things a little by treating and borrowing afterward. That this suited both gentlemen there can be no question. Mr. Thomson had confidence in human nature, and believed that the liberal loans he was making to his friend would be returned, and, per consequence, his pleasure was actually costing him nothing. Mr. Wilkins's *intentions* were of the very highest order, but his almost constant mingling of pleasure with duty

invariably rendered his most excellent intentions null and void; he therefore borrowed with impunity.

I do not know that there is any particular fascination about a railroad depot; in fact, I am sure there is not, except that it affords one a fine opportunity to have a hasty glance at hasty people; and yet what stranger who had time hanging heavily on his hands ever passed a railroad depot without going in and taking a look around? If there are any such, Messrs. Thomson and Wilkins were exceptions. The Canton-street depot fell in their way, and they walked in. A train of cars had just come in, and was freighted, as was usual, with a goodly number of soldiers. It was rather a novel sight for Mr. Thomson, and, steadying himself by the doorway, he gazed vacantly into the faces as they passed. I am thoroughly convinced in my own mind, and the circumstance which I am about to relate proves the correctness of my belief, that Mr. Thomson did not see any single individual who passed him. The face of a man partially drunk would certainly never be chosen by an artist for the study of intelligence, and I am brought to this conclusion by the fact that while Mr. Thomson stood leaning against the doorway, a number of men came along whose faces, I am sure, Mr. Thomson would have recollected, had he been in his sober senses. There were Birkill, Magdus, Captain Haskins, Smith, McMinigan, and, if I mistake not, all the other heroes of Mr. Thomson's first effort at being a gentleman. The party were dressed in the livery of that ubiquitous old gentleman, Uncle Sam, and appeared to be in the same flow of good spirits which characterized them on Mr. Thomson's first acquaintance, at the oyster wharves elsewhere.

It was no unusual thing, in these early days of the war, for parties who had been boys and men together for years to enlist in a body, and it so occurred that the gentlemen above referred to had been attacked by the war fever, and were now *en route* to join their regiment.

"I tell you it's him," cried Birkill, as he called the attention of the party to the form of Thomas Thomson.

"B'lieve my soul it is," replied Captain Magdus.

"And he don't see us," said Birkill, halting the party, and a merry twinkle coming into his eyes. "Here's some fun!" he continued, after a moment's pause. "Follow me!" and then, to the inspiring vocal strains of "The Girl I left Behind

Me," with the imitation drum accompaniment, the party moved along, and by the merest accident in the world, first hustled Mr. Thomson from his support, and then allowed him to fall to the ground. There was considerable surprise and no little solicitude manifested by the party when it was discovered that a gentleman had been *accidentally* knocked down, but when the gentleman was picked up, and was discovered to be "our old friend, Mr. Thomson without the 'p,'" the surprise was doubled, and the most friendly congratulations and inquiries followed.

After Mr. Wilkins had been introduced, the entire party proceeded to the boat. It wanted but a few moments of the hour for the vessel to start, and as Thomas Thomson expressed a desire to remain out of the sight of Mr. Wontus, he was carefully deposited on a pile of quartermaster's stores, in the gangway, while Mr. Wilkins and the others fell to enjoying themselves as best suited their fancy.

Mr. Wontus was quietly enjoying what is expressively called a "snooze," and Mr. Nidd was taking a view of Fort McHenry, and wondering that the sentinels who paced the wall by the edge of the water did not first fall asleep and then fall into the water, when the bell tapped, and the hurry and bustle of casting off the fastenings commenced. This roused Mr. Nidd from his reverie, and he took his stand on the promenade deck at the rear of the boat.

"Cast off that stern hawser!" cried the captain, and the wheels commenced to revolve. "Cast loose, for'ard, there!"

This was all Mr. Nidd heard, for an object in the shape of a man, with a large traveling-bag in his hand, came moving down the street at a rapid rate of speed, sawing the air with his disengaged hand, and yelling at the top of his voice for the boat to wait for him. For a moment Mr. Nidd stood as though riveted to the spot. His hands nervously clutched the taffrail, and he bent forward to be better able to see the face of the new-comer. The man came nearer, and a moment more would see him upon the boat. The tide was running out swiftly, and the motion of the wheels was fast moving the craft out into the stream. If they were stopped there was a fair chance that the party would get aboard. But they were not, and all because Mr. Nidd suddenly cried out "Scribendi!" and quickly followed that exclamation with "Let her go! Cast off them ropes! Be lively! be quick—botheration! be quick!"

These expressions, startling in themselves, were accompanied by a series of frantic gesticulations, which drew the attention not only of the officers of the boat, but everybody else, to the speaker, and induced the pilot to believe that something terrible had happened or was about to happen, and to ring on more steam; the ultimate result of which was that the boat shot rapidly forward, and left the wharf just far enough behind to prevent the gentleman on shore from undertaking to leap on board. The whole affair occurred under the immediate and intensely interested supervision of Mr. Nidd; and no sooner did he observe the result, and the disappointed look which the face of the man on the slip wore, than he threw his head back, placed his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, and then and there actually danced what he intended for a most triumphant jig.

The conduct of Mr. Nidd on this occasion was without question malevolent; for, as he stood on the deck, his eyes fixed on the receding form of his rival, a shade of pleasurable emotion appeared to glide over his countenance, and, without deigning to give any one a reason for his singular behavior, he walked to his state-room, muttering the word, "Beautiful!"

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN THE CHESAPEAKE—THE PIRATES, AND THE HEROISM OF BENJAMIN WILKINS.

THE coolness of the sea air, together with the monotonous motion of the boat, soon lulled the passengers into silence, and afterwards to sleep, and the next morning dawned very much the same as it dawns on all other mornings when the weather is clear. When it became light enough to distinguish objects at a distance, the form of Thomas Thomson was seen standing on the forward deck, his hands resting on the rail, and his eyes fixed upon the foaming water beneath him. As he stood there his face wore an expression of deep distress, if not despair, and he mentally vowed, as he had done before, that he would never get drunk any more.

The sun was just showing his face over the tops of the pine trees which fringed the eastern shore of the bay when Mr. Wontus stepped out from his state-room, accompanied by Mr. Nidd. The two made their way to the promenade deck, where they were shortly joined by Mr. Wilkins.

"A grand and imposing morning," said Mr. Wontus, stretching his arms and beating his breast with his hands.

"And *he's* left behind," said Mr. Nidd, rubbing his hands.

"Left behind!" cried Mr. Wontus, wonderingly. "Who is left behind?"

Mr. Nidd made no reply; his mind appeared to be wandering back to the evening before, when he had been so instrumental in clearing the boat from her fastenings, and thereby leaving an anxious gentleman on shore.

Mr. Wontus found it necessary to repeat his question.

"Scribendi!—Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson." As Mr. Nidd spoke he laughed most immoderately, and as such conduct on his part was extraordinary, Mr. Wontus looked more astonished than ever, and asked Mr. Nidd if he had slept well, and if he felt well now.

"I am almost sorry," said Mr. Nidd, after a pause, and without heeding his friend's query concerning his health, "that I didn't let him get aboard. (A pause, during which Mr. Nidd looked down into the water.) I'd have drowned him," he continued, his face assuming an almost savage expression. "Would I forgive him? I'll see; yes, I'll see." This was said as though he was speaking to himself; and more of the same style might have followed had it not been that Mr. Wontus interrupted by demanding an explanation. The whole affair was a mystery to him, and he feared that Nidd might be afflicted with the primary symptoms of lunacy. Mr. Nidd therefore explained, and the party soon after retired to breakfast.

It was after breakfast, for the boat was unusually late, and Mr. Wontus and Nidd were sitting on the after-deck, smoking their cigars and listening to the conversation of the passengers concerning the conduct of the war (a very popular subject at this time), when Mr. Wilkins approached and asked Mr. Wontus for the loan of his cigar until he lit his.

"This is a perfect inland sea,—a beautiful sheet of water," said Mr. Wontus, without addressing anybody in particular.

"Very fine," said Mr. Nidd, puffing his cigar.

"It 'minds me," said Mr. Wilkins, sitting down and placing his feet on the chair in front of him, and holding his cigar between his fingers, "of a voyage I once made in the Caribbean Sea. The pirates were very troublesome at that time."

"Pirates!" interrupted Mr. Wontus, turning to Mr. Wilkins, and speaking in accents of interest; "I've often read of them, but it has never been my good fortune to meet with a man who has come in contact with them."

"Didn't?" asked Mr. Wilkins, nonchalantly.

"Never!" said Mr. Wontus.

"Oh, I've met 'em, often, in different ways and latitudes," replied Wilkins, puffing his cigar again.

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Wontus. "Why, I thought they were such blood-thirsty people that no man was ever left to tell the tale."

"Nor they ain't, as a general thing," said Mr. Wilkins.

"And you met them?—the pirates themselves?"

"Yes."

"And escaped?"

"Yes."

"Didn't lose your life?"

It was a rather singular question under the circumstances.

"No, but I had considerable trouble to save it, although I didn't think much of it then." This was said by Mr. Wilkins in such a manner as to convey the idea that he considered it but an every-day affair, and would like to drop the subject. But Mr. Wontus was interested, and insisted on hearing the story. "We have plenty of time yet," said he. "The captain says that we will not be in for an hour or two, and I should like to hear you tell it. Wouldn't we, Nidd?" Mr. Nidd, thus appealed to, thought he would oblige Mr. Wontus, and accordingly said "We would."

"It was just such a place as this here, but a little off shore," said Mr. Wilkins, clearing his throat and moving his hand toward the land. "We had touched at Barbadoes the day before to take on the captain's niece, one of the most beautiful and interestin' young ladies I ever saw; and was all a lookin' to a quick and safe passage home, and in a pretty general high good humor. We were standin' a little to the no'th of east, under a stiff breeze, with the mizzen, spanker, fo'-top gallants,

all the jibs, mains'l, and maintop studdin' sails all set and trim; and the skys'l in the wind. (A pause.) But—indeed, gentlemen, I don't want to be horrofierin' you with scenes like this one was." And Mr. Wilkins again smoked his cigar.

"Go on, Mr. Wilkins, go on!" cried Mr. Wontus, turning round in his chair and looking at Wilkins. "Go on, sir; I demand—*we* demand it. Don't we, Nidd?" Mr. Nidd said "We do," and the story proceeded.

"Well," continued the story-teller, "I was, at this time, the first mate of the brig *Galatæa*, as trim and snug a craft as ever carved the water of the ocean, and almost as swift as the Flyin' Dutchman. Captain Jacobs, of the State of Maine, was her commander, and I was the first officer. We were sailin' along on the outside of the islands, and were just a little off Martinique, when a lively-lookin' ketch shot out from under the land up toward Dominica,—I'm partic'lar about the places, because I want to come right down to the facts,—and made right for us, with all her canvas pullin' like a harpooned whale. There wasn't nothin' singular about the boat, and I've seen hundreds of 'em pass the ship without givin' 'em the slightest particle of notice, but this here feller kind of somehow or another excited my attention, and says I to myself, says I, 'Ben, better keep your weather eye open, old boy;' and, by gracious! I did, old man. Bonaparte can say what he pleases, gentlemen, about Providence bein' on the side of the heaviest artillery, but my experience is that Provey's somewhere else too, sometimes."

"Quite right," remarked Mr. Wontus, in an attitude of deep attention. "Quite right."

"You see, our ship bein' a merchantman, didn't have more than enough men to work her, and very few arms; so without lettin' on, says I to old Joe Bunker, one of the fo'-top men, 'Joe, you go down in the hold and get out that chist of cutlasses, and send 'em up along with all the muskets you can find. I want,' says I, 'to see just what there is on this here ship, and clean things up, so that when we get into port we can invite folks on board and make somethin' like a show.' The old man didn't say nothin', nor did I, for I didn't want to raise no fuss or alarm, but I thought I'd just have things ready, and if there wasn't any occasion to use 'em, why, it wasn't any trouble to put 'em away again; all the time, though, I kind of thought that we'd want 'em, and kept my eye on

the ketch." (The speaker ceased, and commenced vigorously puffing his cigar.) "She looked innocent enough, was as light as a duck, and was now just abreast of the waist of the ship, and seemed to be gettin' in on the same tack as ourselves, without comin' closer; but still I watched her, and it was a pretty good thing I did, for it gave us a show which we wouldn't a' had if I hadn't. It wasn't long before Joe sent the chist and the muskets up, and I was lookin' at 'em; thinks I, them's pretty heavy war material, but I didn't say nothin', only call a couple of men and start 'em to gettin' out the ammunition and cleanin' the muskets up. The chist I undertook to open myself, but, be thunder! it was rusted clean shut and the hinges wouldn't move, so I sent for a screw-driver and took the hinges off. (Smoke.) Now, gentlemen, a screw-driver ain't much of an instrument for fightin' with, is it?"

Mr. Wontus said it was not, and the bystanders agreed with him.

"Well, while I was gettin' out the cutlasses, the young lady come along, looking so sweet and nice, that I almost trembled when I looked at her.

"'What are you doin', Mr. Wilkins?' says she, kickin' the butt of a musket with her pretty little foot.

"'Oh, just brightnen' up things,' says I; 'when we've got handsome young ladies aboard we've got to have things lookin' ship-shape.'

"'Why,' says she, a-smilin' in a way that most made my heart sick, 'you look as if you were expectin' a corsair to attack us, and you were makin' preparations to defend us.'

"'Oh, I guess not,' says I. And I took a sly squint at my ketch over the taffrail.

"'Oh, I hope one will come! I would so love to see a real live corsair, such as I have read about.' And the young lady went on a-clappin' her hands in high delight. Directly says she, a-soberin' down and lookin' regretful like, 'I don't believe any will come; but I wish they would; I do so.' And sayin' this, she flung herself around and passed aft."

"Brave girl! very brave girl!" said some of the passengers, who had become interested listeners.

"Fool!" said Mr. Nidd, without raising his head or showing the slightest emotion.

Mr. Wontus cast a glance at his friend, and would probably

have made some remark had it not been for Mr. Wilkins, who secured a new light for his cigar, and continued:

"It was about four bells, I guess, when I first spied my gentleman, and it was now nearly noon, and yet the feller had been about the same distance off for the last hour. Everything was now in as good order as it could be put in, and the guns was all loaded, and I kept 'em on deck without creatin' any talk by sayin' we'd have a salute at sundown in honor of the young lady. (Smoke.) 'Now, Benjamin,' says I, 'you've done about what's right, you'd better go aloft and see what you can see.' Up I goes, and I had hardly got into the top when the ketch laid her helm hard aport, and was makin' right for us. (Smoke.) From where I was I could see her deck through the glass; but there was nothin' there but the cove at the helm and two or three fellers tendin' sail. I commenced to think that I'd been mistaken after all, and that the feller was nothin' more'n a market craft, when I spied some movements about the aft hatch, and two or three heads stick out and then dart back again. This was pretty convincin' evidence that the feller wasn't exactly snug and right, so I goes down on deck and tell the captain the whole affair.

"'Mr. Wilkins,' says he, in a partic'lar laughin' way he had when he didn't exactly take things in, 'I guess there ain't nothin' the matter with the feller; there ain't none of them kind of people in these waters about now, I'm of the opinion; but it won't hurt nothin' to put on a little more sail, and we'll leave him astern just for fun.'

"'Ay, ay, cap,' says I; but I meant to keep a bright eye in my head, and I went on deck and had the ship dressed in all the canvas she owned. My eyes! she nearly jumped out of the water, and I commenced to think that the thing was about over, when old Joe Bunker comes up, and, says he, 'Mr. Wilkins, them fellers is a-catchin' up on to us.' I looked over the rail, and, by gracious! there the ketch come sure enough, a-jumpin' through the water like mad, and with my naked eye I could see her deck a-swarmin' with as dirty a lookin' set of thieves as ever stood up under canvas.

"'Beat to quarters!' I yelled, thinkin' I was on board a man-o'-war. But it didn't make any difference, for it seemed as if everybody understood the thing at once; and, nearly as

quick as it takes me to tell it, every man had his musket and sabre: some of 'em had two sabres.

"'What in the devil's up?' cried Captain Jacobs, comin' out of the cabin, with the young lady close behind him.

"'Up?' says I. 'The devil's up!' And I pointed to the ketch, which was glidin' over the water like a gull, and comin' close and closer every minute.

"'Put on more sail!' cried the captain.

"'Can't do it, sir,' says I. 'She's got all she'll hold now.' The captain throwed his eyes aloft, and seen the truth of my words.

"'The *Galatæa* never was beat a-sailin', cried the captain, 'and she sha'n't be beat now.'"

A murmur ran through the crowd of listeners, and Mr. Wilkins smoked more vigorously than ever.

"I cast my eye at the ketch, which was now jumpin' along like a race-horse, and beside which the *Galatæa* seemed to be a snail, and then I looked at the lovely girl. There she stood, her silky tresses wavin' in the breeze, and her blue eyes flashin' like lanterns on a dark night. Her brow was clouded, and her ruby lips was frozed together like chunks of coral. (Smoke.) I can't say exactly that I know what love is, gentlemen, but at that moment I rather think that I loved that girl, for I made up my mind that, live or die, sink or swim, bust up or go down, I'd stand by her. 'Ben Wilkins,' says I, 'you *shall* do it!' and shiver my tarry top-lights if I didn't. But there wasn't much time to think of anything, so I glanced around at the men; but, from the looks of things, I felt that there wasn't much to be looked for from them, and the captain had gone below for his pistols.

"'Miss,' says I, steppin' up to the young woman, 'can you fight?'

"'Fight?' says she, her lips curlin' and her beautiful eyes snappin'. 'Fight? Indeed, I can! But I haven't got no arms.'

"'There's a pistol,' says I, handin' one of my weapons to her. I turned my attention to other things."

"Astonishing!" interrupted Mr. Wontus.

"Astonishin'? Well, I should think it was. But just hold on a minute. Directin' the girl to stand by me, and tellin' her that no harm should come to her except over my

lifeless body, I took another look over the side, and there was the ketch, swarmin' with pirates, just under our quarter.

"'Here they come, boys!' I cried, and I jumped for a cutlass. Old Joe Bunker jumped at the same time, and as soon as we got our weapons, me and him and the girl went to the poop and prepared ourselves for the muss." (Here Mr. Wilkins paused for a moment, as though overcome by the memories of that dreadful day.) "Poor man! I've never seen Captain Jacobs since. We had hardly got the lady sheltered behind us when the devils come a-rushin' over the side like a parcel of monkeys. There must have been over a hundred of 'em, and our crew didn't count over twenty-two men, all told; and each of 'em was armed with a kind of a spear like a boat-hook, and a big knife. I can never forget 'em. As they crawled along the bulwarks, they looked so much like the blood-thirsty monsters which I fell in with once off the coast of Africa. But somethin' had to be done, so I sung out to look out for them; and then such a scene took place as I hope, as I am a livin' man, I never want to see again. The boys had got together on the fo'cas'le, and were poppin' away as fast as they could load; but the thieves dropped over the sides, and hid behind the galley and other places, until there must have been more than half of the whole crowd on the ship. Of course, Joe and I weren't idle, and we made more than one of the bloody scoundrels roll round in his own gore durin' the time they were gettin' together for a charge."

"The girl! the young lady!" cried Mr. Wontus, excitedly. "What was she doing?"

"She?—she was couchin' behind the binnacle. I wouldn't let her expose her life needlessly, although she kept her pistol cocked, and often wanted to have a shot. But I couldn't allow it, you see, gentlemen; I couldn't allow it."

"Certainly not!" cried a chorus of voices.

"Well, the whole thing took place in a flash, and before I knowed exactly what had been done, there wasn't a man of all our crew left standin' on the deck. The pirates rushed into the poor fellers in a mob, and them that they didn't spear or cut down with their knives they chucked overboard, and the deck was swimmin' with blood. The crew fighted well,—like tigers,—but the number was overpowerin', and they caved like grass before the mower. The cuttin' and slashin' was

horrible, and for a moment—only a moment—I didn't know what to do. There was one big feller, with a red cap on his head, who appeared to be the leader, and thinks I to myself, 'If I can get you, this thing may make a change yet.' I was just runnin' this through my mind when the pirates got a sight of the young woman's dress floatin' in the wind, and, with a fiendish howl, they started aft. My mind was made up in a moment, and tellin' the girl to keep quiet, and biddin' Joe follow me, I dashed down off the poop and made for 'em, Joe just behind me. (Smoke.)

"A good many of the devils was a-lookin' after plunder about the ship, but there must have been more nor a dozen under the command of the feller with the red cap. We met 'em about amidships, and me and the feller with the red cap commenced business immediately. I pulled my pistol on him, but she missed fire, and then we closed. The man was nearly double my heft, and fought like a fiend. But it was no use, for we clinched, and I just doubled him over backwards, and then rammed the end of his spear-handle down his throat, and *he* went under. (Sensation on the part of the listeners.) When I got time to look around, Joe was a-lyin' dead at my feet, with about a dozen lyin' dead around him, every one bearin' the wide mark of Joe's cutlass. But there wasn't much time to do any lookin' or thinkin' either just about then; so, drawin' my weapon, I sailed into the crowd, and beat 'em back to near the fo'mast, where they turned on me, and things got warmer than I ever want to see 'em again, I tell you."

"How many were in the crowd which you and Joe attacked in the first place?" asked Mr. Nidd, looking up.

"Well, over a dozen, I reckon."

"And Joe had a dozen dead ones piled around him, had he?"

"Yes."

"Well now, Mr. Wilkins, how many was in the party *you* drove to the mast?" A murmur ran through the crowd of listeners.

The narrator saw that he had made a slight mistake, and sought to rectify it. "You see," said he, placing his cigar in his mouth and rolling it around like a cow does her cud, "there was a lot of 'em come up out of the fo'hatch just as

I was a settlin' the leader, so after Joe had finished his men there was as many more left."

The explanation was evidently satisfactory, and the speaker continued:

"My idea was to keep myself between the pirates and the girl, but, gentlemen, it wasn't within the range of a human bein's power to do it, for they crowded around me as thick as flies in a sugar bar'l, and I had to take the best ground I could to defend myself. I kept 'em back a long while, and we cut and slashed in fine style. I don't think I ever made so many—and I've made considerable—narrow escapes in my life. Why, really my clothin' was fairly shaved off from my body, and one feller would have taken off my head if I hadn't been a little too quick for him and dodged; as it was he cut off all the hair on the top of my head so thunderin' close that I looked as if I was bald. (Another murmur in the crowd.) But I stuck to 'em until my strength commenced to give out, and then castin' my eyes to the poop, I saw that it was all up, for two or three of the scoundrels were there and was holdin' the strugglin' girl by the arms. 'Here's the only chance left,' says I; so knockin' three or four of 'em down with my fists, I took hold of the mainstay, and, before they recovered themselves, I pulled myself, hand over hand, out of their reach, and then swung myself on to the main yard-arm and took a blow. But maybe I'm tirin' you, gentlemen?" said Mr. Wilkins, complacently, after a pause.

"No; go on! go on!" cried Mr. Wontus and others. "Go on!"

The speaker went on: "But I wasn't allowed to rest there long before a half-dozen of the pirates commenced climbin' the shrouds, holdin' their knives in their teeth. Says I, 'Ben, your time's about come;' but bein' a good swimmer I made up my mind that I'd make one more effort, so just as they were climbin' over the main-top I dropped down into the sea with a yell, and swam under the ship's bottom, where I took hold of the keel and held fast till I felt sure that the pirates would believe I had gone to the bottom or been devoured by sharks (Smoke.)

"I forgot to mention," said the speaker, pausing, "that I dropped my cutlass durin' the fight on deck, and picked up the screw-driver and rammed it in my belt just as I was goin'

up the stay. I mention this here because that screw-driver is of considerable account in the completion of this story, or was to me, anyhow. Well, as I was sayin', I held fast to the keel for some considerable time, and then pulled myself along the bottom till I saw the ketch move off, and the ship luff around into the wind and move toward the shore. Now, thinks I, most of 'em have gone and now's the time for me to act. Climbin' up the cut-water, which was pretty hard work, I swung myself on the martingale, got on to the jib-boom and took a peep over the deck; and there, what a sight met my eyes! (Smoke.) The deck was swimmin' with blood, and not more than fifteen or twenty of the pirates were left to navigate the ship. There was the mu-kets a-layin' scattered over the fo'castle, but there were two or three of the villains between me and them, and I commenced to form a plan for gittin' to 'em. I had no weapons, leastwise I thought I hadn't, when my hand accidentally touched the screw-driver in my belt, and my heart liked to have jumped out of my mouth with gladness. Have you ever been that way?" asked Mr. Wilkins, stopping the story and looking round at the party; but before any one had an opportunity to reply he answered the question himself, and commenced to furnish a dissertation on the different feelings which come over a man under sundry circumstances which he mentioned. In fact, he waded so deeply into his new subject that it was only after a rather severe reprimand from Mr. Wontus that he went on with the narrative.

"Well, to return," said he. "The moment I felt the screw-driver in my hand, that minute I felt that there was hope. For myself I didn't care; but the desire to save the beautiful creature, thus left alone among a band of ferocious, unchristian devils, gave me new strength, and I felt that I could fight a regiment. The fellers between me and the muskets had their backs to me; so slidin' down the boom, with the screw-driver in my right hand, I made one bound for the nearest man, and sunk the tool so hard into his back that it came out the other side. Quick as lightnin' I drew it from his body, and sunk it into another feller, while with my left hand I twisted another's head so bad that he fell down dead. So in I went, the sight of warm, fresh blood addin' fuel to my infuriated passion, until I reached the muskets. Once among

the muskets, with all the pirates at the stern, I commenced loadin' and firin' as fast as I could, and in less than ten minutes there wasn't a live head to be seen anywhere on the ship's deck except the young lady. I called to her to come to me, and she did, and throwed her arms around my neck and called me her deliverer. (Smoke.) But this wasn't no time for thanks, so I went to work a-batterin' down the hatches, to keep the skunks below that had gone there to keep clear of me. When that was done, I commenced lookin' around to see how things stood. There was the ketch a-sailin' off as gay as a lark, thinkin' that the *Galatæa* would follow. But she didn't, for, takin' the young woman to the wheel, I showed her how to keep the ship steady. Then I went to work throwin' the carcasses overboard, and there must have been over fifty of 'em, all told,—all pirates. (Sensation and more smoke.)

"I soon got things pretty well fixed, and then went to the wheel myself. Of course, the girl was about played out with the scenes she'd seen and the work she'd done, but she didn't want to give up; but it was no use. So makin' her sit down I commenced manœuvrin' the ship, so as to make the pirates on the ketch think she was becalmed, and in that way night come and give us a chance to escape. They signaled once or twice, and I throwed the ship around into the wind to fool 'em, and when the sun went down they was hull down. As soon as they were out of sight I tacked ship, and by mornin' was far enough out of their reach."

"But what became of the ship and the young lady?" asked Mr. Wontus, as Wilkins ceased speaking, and was about to move off.

"Why, we had a good breeze and fine weather," he continued, turning round, "and takin' turns, me and the girl sailed her into New Orleans in less than a fortnight, and there I left her to keep my business engagements in another quarter. The pirates who had hid in the hold I kept there, and delivered them to the authorities, and they were hung."

"But the girl?" queried Mr. Wontus.

"Well, me and her were pretty thick, that's a fact, and the owners wanted me to marry her and take charge of the *Galatæa*, but I hadn't time, and one evenin' I just cleared out without sayin' a word to anybody, and I've never seen any of 'em since."

"Wonderful!" said Mr. Nidd, skeptically.

"Self-sacrificing!" said Mr. Wontus.

"Deserved a great reward," said a score of voices; and amid the exclamations of surprise which this rather remarkable story had elicited, Mr. Wilkins threw his cigar overboard, and modestly withdrew from the party.

"A great liar!" said Mr. Nidd, looking after the retreating form of the hero. "Baron Munchausen must look to his laurels as long as that man lives. Munchausen himself——"

"Mr. Nidd! Mr. Nidd!" cried Mr. Wontus, interrupting, "be a little charitable. Perhaps the man has gone through these things. In fact, from his earnest manner and his great familiarity with the subject, I have no doubt of it."

"You're right, old man," cried a voice on the outside of the crowd, which sounded like Mr. Birkell's; "I was on that ship myself; was one of 'em that was chucked overboard. I swam ashore, and am here to corroborate the story,—every word of it. It's as true as preachin'."

Mr. Wontus jumped to his feet the moment the words were spoken, and, slapping Nidd on the shoulder, with a triumphant look in his eye, demanded to know what he (Nidd) thought of that. The bystanders also manifested considerable interest. But the boat was approaching her landing, and amid the bustle and excitement which followed this event, the affair was completely swallowed, and some important information probably lost forever.

CHAPTER XVII.

NIDD MEETS WITH A TERRIBLE ADVENTURE, AND THE CORPS MAKES SUNDRY ACQUAINTANCES OF AN AGREEABLE CHARACTER.

FEW of my readers, I dare say, have ever met in society or elsewhere the renowned Doctor Æsculapius, yet I imagine him to be pretty well known for all that, for on every side I hear of his beautiful daughter Hygeia. I am not certain, but I presume that it must have been the fashion of the day in

which this daughter was born to the doctor, for each and every one of the female sex to assume some degree or title, for I find it recorded that this young lady grew to the years of mature womanhood without experiencing the mumps or the measles, or any of the other events which mark the passing years of youth, and hence on arriving at that interesting age was christened Hygeia, the goddess of health.

Now the young woman being christened a goddess, and goddesses being quite fashionable, and fashionable people being much sought after, suggests the thought that the hotel at Fortress Monroe is called the Hygeia.

A hotel anywhere along the sea-coast and in the vicinity of a fort is not generally such an important affair as to become a matter of history, and yet there is something so exceedingly odd and interesting about this hotel, just at this time, that I cannot forbear mentioning it. Now by this I do not mean that the hotel itself—that is, the building and the different rooms — is very odd; but I refer more particularly to the people who inhabit the hotel, and may be considered as fixtures, either of the building or its immediate vicinity.

It was Sunday morning that the Wontus Corps of Observation first laid eyes on the Hygeia Hotel, and saw its dark and sombre background, the walls of Fortress Monroe. A few clouds had made their appearance in the sky, and the weather was warm and murky. I cannot say whether Mr. Wontus was aware of the fact that it was Sunday or not, but when at length the boat was fastened to the wharf he insisted that the corps should remain on board, and it was not until every other passenger had gone ashore that Mr. Wontus and his party ventured up the gang-plank to where the captain of the boat was standing. Once here, Mr. Wontus inquired if his baggage could remain aboard until he had secured apartments at the hotel, and being answered in the affirmative, he took Mr. Nidd's arm and sauntered up the wharf. The scene was so entirely new to him that he lost no time in expressing his delight, which at each moment was heightened by some new object meeting his gaze, and ere he had gone many steps he stood stock still and looked about him.

Directly in front of him stood the hotel, its white walls peeping out from amidst the green shrubbery, and behind it were the gray walls of the fort, from whose parapet looked

outward the black muzzles of the heavy guns of defense. In his rear lie the pleasant waters of Hampton Roads, in the middle of which were the Rip-raps, with its derricks and tripods, a shapeless mass of huge stones and iron; and farther over were the glittering white sands of the shores, gradually losing themselves in the Elizabeth River. To his right were the capes and the open sea in the distance, and nearer was the red hull of the light-ship rocking in the silent, never-ceasing swell of the ocean. On the left, and beyond the shipping which lie at anchor in the dim distance, the James River came stealing down until it mingled with the Elizabeth and is lost in the waters of the Roads; while nearer is the faint outline of Newport News, and the grounds made forever memorable by the *Monitor* and *Merrimac* but a few days before. Shoreward are seen the tree-tops where the village of Hampton stood, and still nearer the marine hospital stands like a vidette picket on the bleak sands of the Peninsula. Coming closer are the camps of troops, and still nearer is the settlement of contrabands. All these things Mr. Wontus saw and admired; not only admired himself, but compelled the company to join him in his admiration and agree in his remarks. The passengers, and those who had flocked to the boat to secure the newspapers of the day before, had left the wharf, but still Mr. Wontus and his party lingered. Now the freight was being landed; all the space was needed. and the corps was politely requested to move on. The party started, and, in all probability would have gone directly to the hotel, but for the directions from a sentinel to "go in there," pointing at the same time to a small frame building, over the door of which were the words "Provost Marshal." Mr. Wontus looked at Nidd, then at the guard, and then at the words over the door. It was evident that he still retained some recollection of his Washington experience, for no sooner had he comprehended the meaning of the words than he almost upset Mr. Nidd by the suddenness of his movements in the direction indicated by the sentinel.

"Your passes, gentlemen," said an officer who was sitting behind a small rough table in one corner of the little room.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Wontus, and forthwith he commenced fumbling in his different pockets. But the passes were not there, and the great drops of perspiration stood out upon his

brow as he announced the fact that he could not find the documents.

"Very sorry, gentlemen; but you will have to go on board the steamer again and return to Baltimore. Persons not in the service and without written authority are not permitted to land on the Point."

Mr. Nidd, who had been gazing out of the window, with his attention fixed on the shipping, to the exclusion of more important business, now turned round, and, seeing Mr. Wontus and the rest wearing such sorrowful countenances, asked the reason therefor, and was informed. His only reply was a low muttering, and he deposited the passes on the table.

"All correct!" remarked the officer, scanning the papers; and with more elasticity than was usual with him Mr. Wontus walked out of the room and led the way toward the hotel.

"How very beautiful it is!" cried Mr. Wontus, as he reached the sidewalk running in front of the hotel, and pointing to the long, wide veranda which traversed the entire south front of the building. "How cool and refreshing it looks!" said he, plucking the leaves from an overhanging branch. "I suppose this is the entrance." And he laid his hand upon the gate and opened it.

"Very quiet," said Mr. Nidd, looking up and down the veranda.

"Somebody's dead, I reckon," remarked Mr. Wilkins, coming forward and manifesting his accustomed interest. "Shutters shut."

"Ah, there's a man!" cried Wontus, as a soldier with his musket at a shoulder came slowly along the path. "We'll walk in." The gentlemen walked in.

"Halt!" commanded the soldier, quickly, but not so quick as to prevent Mr. Wilkins from throwing himself at full length on the luxuriant grass. "You can't go in here, sir!" The last was addressed to Mr. Nidd, who was staring the man in the face in a manner which some people would be inclined to call impudent.

"You must get out of here!" continued the soldier.

"Certainly," said Mr. Wontus; and he walked out, accompanied by Wilkins and Thomson. The day was warm, and the shade of the trees was most refreshing. Mr. Nidd concluded that he would stay where he was.

"You must get out of here," said the guard, as Nidd seated himself on the steps and commenced fanning himself with his hat.

"This way," cried Mr. Wontus, cheerfully; and he passed on up the sidewalk. Mr. Nidd neither spoke nor moved. his face wore a look of warm, stoical indifference, and he fanned himself vigorously.

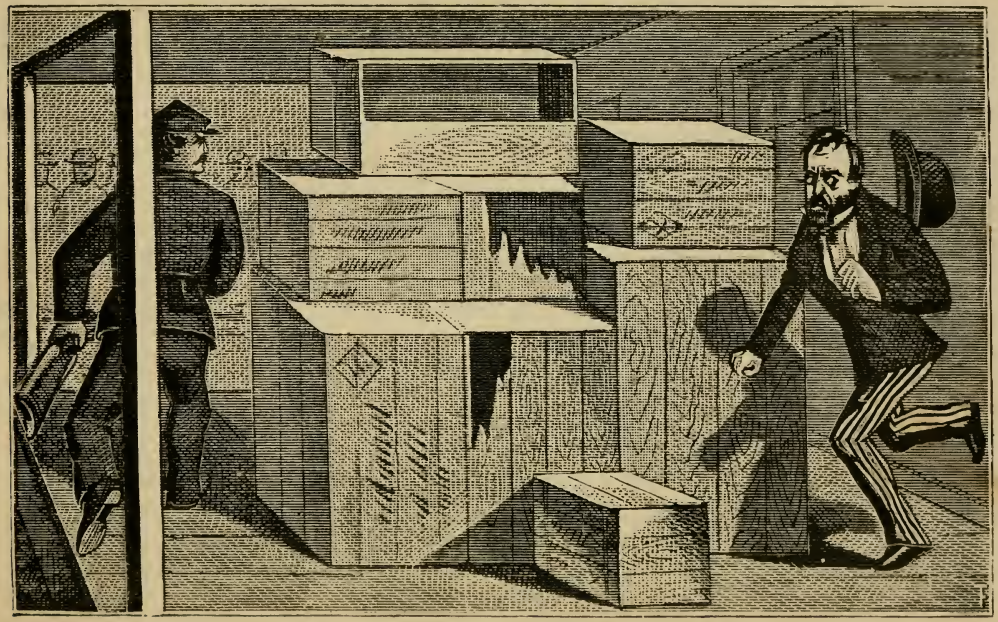
"Are you going out?" asked the soldier.

Mr. Nidd made no reply, nor was there even the slightest indication that he had heard the remark. There was silence for a time, during which the soldier looked at Mr. Nidd, and Mr. Nidd looked at everything but the interrogator.

"Come, come!" said the guard, at length, speaking quickly, and looking about him as though he was fearful that he might be observed and thought negligent of his duty; "you must got out of here, do you hear?"

Mr. Nidd cast a contemptuous glance at the guard, and then glanced up and down the porch. Placing his hat upon his head he at length stood upon his feet, and the guard, believing that he was about taking his departure from the grounds and that portion of the building used by the military authorities for the storage of a variety of material, faced about and proceeded on his beat. That the sentinel was mistaken in his conclusions there can be no reasonable doubt, for the moment his back was turned, Nidd very unceremoniously stepped along the sward, and again seated himself on the porch. From his new position he had a good view of Mr. Wontus, who was busily engaged in making sundry necessary inquiries of a number of gentlemen at the corner of the hotel. Mr. Nidd had planted himself beneath the shade of a bushy apple-tree whose blossoms perfumed the air with their fragrance, and as he took off his hat and recommenced the fanning process, his face wore a more serene and contented appearance. He looked comfortable.

I have heard of men, ignorant of the imminent peril which underlaid them, sitting on a barrel of powder, complacently smoking their pipes; and I have often imagined how exceedingly uncomfortable they must have been when made acquainted with the fact. But there is a degree of pleasure found in being in the midst of danger, when you feel sure in your own mind that either Providence or some arrangement



NIDD THINKS TO ENJOY HIMSELF, BUT BECOMES ALARMED.

of your own makes you perfectly safe, which cannot be found in any other condition in life; at least, such is my experience. But no matter.

Mr. Nidd had fixed himself in the most comfortable attitude, and was enjoying the cool sea air which fanned his heated brow, when the guard again approached, but at such a distance that Mr. Nidd felt sure that he would escape his attention. And he bid fair to do so, for the guard passed slowly along, with his eyes turned toward the shipping.

Not knowing exactly, I take the liberty of presuming, that most people have experienced that peculiar sensation caused by a most intense desire to scratch a certain part of the body just at some particular time when one's hands are in such a position or condition as to effectually prevent any such movement, and to make a noise just at some particular moment when it was your heart's greatest desire to remain perfectly quiet. At the very moment that Mr. Nidd believed that he was going to escape the vigilance of the guard and be allowed a continuation of his enjoyment, he was taken with an irrepressible desire to sneeze. Now sneezing was something that Mr. Nidd was seldom afflicted with, but just now he felt that he must sneeze or die. In vain he pressed his handkerchief into his mouth and held his nose; it *would* come, and come it did, and in a most astounding fashion. Once, twice, three times he sneezed, and in such a manner as would astonish the ears of a cannoneer.

Instinctively, the guard no sooner heard the sound emanating from a forbidden direction than he let his piece fall into the hollow of his left hand, and, gazing through the intermediate foliage, he demanded with an oath what Mr. Nidd was doing there. Had Mr. Nidd been inclined to answer, it is probable that he could not have articulated a word, for he was diligently applying his handkerchief to his nose, and large, pearly tears were standing in his eyes.

The knowledge that the intruder had disobeyed the former orders to vacate the premises, and the rather nonchalant manner of Mr. Nidd, had evidently aroused the guard's ire, for, upon his receiving no reply to his request, without further ceremony he charged at Mr. Nidd with a rush, and barely gave that gentleman time to gather up his long legs and spring on to the floor of the veranda before he was upon

him. The reader knows that Mr. Nidd was by habit generally austere and didactic in his manner; but now that he was opposed in such a terrible manner, and had little or no experience as to the duties or privileges of a soldier, his severe manner was increased, and the moment he was out of the way of the bayonet that moment he commenced such a tirade of abuse as to cause Mr. Wontus and the party to look round in wonder.

"Come down out of there!" cried the soldier.

"I'm a free American citizen," shouted Mr. Nidd, savagely, in return, "and I'll see you cursed first!"

"I'll shoot you!" cried the soldier, cocking his piece, which, Mr. Nidd observed, was without a cap.

"Shoot and be continentaled!" cried Nidd, at the same time, however, seeking the protection of the pile of material on the porch.

The sentinel was now thoroughly aroused. There was mischief lurking in his eye and manner. "I'll see about this!" said he; and, with a bound, he leaped on to the floor, and, with his piece at a charge, he made at Nidd as though he thirsted for his blood.

"Go it, old man!" cried the party at the corner, now thoroughly interested in the affair.

But Mr. Nidd wanted no advice, for the determined manner and the vigorous lunges which the guard made at him whenever he came near enough to warrant the effort was all that was necessary to induce him to go it just as fast as his legs would carry him.

The affair commenced to assume a serious as well as a ludicrous aspect; serious to Mr. Nidd, but ludicrous to the bystanders. First around one corner of the heap of boxes went Nidd, his hat on the back of his head, and his eyes thrown to the rear in the most fearful manner, and close behind him came the guard. Now they went following each other round and round the pile, which reached nearly to the ceiling; then they halt at different corners, and eye each other with fiendish glances, and the chase began again. The crowd of spectators became larger each moment, and the choicest morsels of advice were showered upon Nidd and his assailant. Again they halted, each peeping from his corner, each intent on doing his best, and then around they went again.

"Tear down the boxes!" shouted a soldier from the fence.

The guard cast his eye upward, and Mr. Nidd seized upon the moment to make a grand dash for life and liberty.

"There he goes!" cried the lookers-on, and round the corner came the guard with quickened steps, and now the chase became more exciting than ever.

"Stop, stop!" cried Mr. Wontus, drawing nearer; but somebody politely requested him to mind his own business, and he did as he was directed, but not without first appealing to some of the bystanders to save his friend's life, which he considered was in danger, on account of the gleaming bayonet and the stalwart form behind it.

Up and down, in and out, first dodging behind this tree and then that, went the guard and Mr. Nidd, in the narrow place between the fence and the veranda; and to everybody save the participants themselves the affair was most laughable.

Mr. Nidd's face was now the color of a well-baked brick, and the perspiration stood out on his brow like huge beads, and trickled from the end of his nose as though that important feature had suddenly become a miniature fountain. On a straight run he was the better man, because of his long legs, but at close quarters and in dodging the guard was many degrees his superior, for many reasons, but principally for his short legs. The affair from the commencement had occupied but a few minutes, and now the end was drawing near. Twice in the last heat the guard had thrust at Mr. Nidd, and Nidd had escaped by the merest chance. It is probable that he would have run out at the gate, but every time that he essayed that movement his long legs occupied too much time in turning the necessary corners, and the close proximity of the guard forbade the undertaking. But the *denouement* was at hand. Nidd had thrice successfully created erroneous ideas in the mind of his pursuer by some clever feints at the lower end of the inclosure, and now he sprang forward with huge strides, and made directly for the front yard, with the bayonet close behind him. It was now plain that he intended leaping the fence at any hazard of life or limb, and he was encouraged in his determination by Thomas Thomson, who, oblivious to all surroundings, was carrying on a most astonishing pantomimic performance intended to be expressive of his desire to see Mr. Nidd safely through his difficulties.

The decisive moment was at hand. Gathering himself up for the leap, he clinched his hands and made the spring. His toes touched the top rail, his hands swung wildly in the air, and his eyes wore a horrifying expression; his equipoise has been disturbed, and his body slanted to the right; he is clear; no, the guard is too close, and the bright bayonet flashes in the sunshine. An encouraging word escaped the lips of Mr. Wontus, and the spectators laughed gleefully. He struggles to clear his foot from the rail; he succeeds! No, it is too late, and the glittering bayonet is thrust forward like a flash, and Mr. Nidd tumbles, not to the ground, for the bayonet has punctured the back part of his trousers, and he is impaled on its point, while the soldier makes a fulcrum of the fence, and holds the gentleman aloft, as an angler would a fish. It was all done with the quickness of thought, and the soldier rested his body on the stock of his musket, while the long arms and longer legs of Mr. Nidd dangled in the air, like a huge spider dangling from his web.

What hard-hearted fellows these soldiers are! This Mr. Wontus not only thought, but said, as he motioned Wilkins to follow him, and the two flew to the rescue. To extricate the gentleman from his uncomfortable position was a work of some magnitude, owing to the dogged indifference of the soldier, who hung to his musket and his victim with a satisfaction so grim as to excite feelings of the greatest disgust in the breast of our hero. At last the task was done, but not until the hands of two or three of the delicate-looking gentlemen who were standing by had lent their assistance. Mr. Nidd was once more upon his feet, while the guard stood leaning on his piece, eyeing the rent in his victim's pantaloons with savage pleasure.

It was some minutes before Mr. Nidd regained his composure, and the moment he did so he inspected his pantaloons, and then cast curses long and deep upon the head of the soldier, who was now at a safe distance, perambulating his beat as though nothing had occurred to disturb the even current of his life.

"Most unfortunate!" said Mr. Wontus; "I hope you are not hurt." And he looked at his fellow-member with solicitude and sympathy.

"Hurt!" cried Mr. Nidd, savagely. "Hurt! I am hurt,—I am crushed,—I shall die of mortification! I shall leave here

on the next boat. Stay? No, sir; I will not stay. Wounded? No, sir, I am not wounded! My flesh is intact, thank God, but I have had enough of this, and enough is as good as a feast!"

Mr. Wontus now endeavored to soothe the wounded spirit of his friend, and cited his own experience to prove that he had been dealt with more severely and without cause. Misery loves company, and the recollections of Mr. Wontus's experience, together with that gentleman's sympathetic manner, so palliated the sufferings of Mr. Nidd, that he finally allowed himself to be led into the office of the hotel, where an explanation of affairs was made to the Officer of the Day by Mr. Wontus, which was so entirely satisfactory that the officer gave them no further trouble. Everybody else appeared to take the matter as an every-day affair, and while Mr. Nidd came in for a fair share of quizzical looks, none were so indelicate as to address him on the subject.

In those days, the office of the Hygeia Hotel was more than an office; it was, among other things, a sort of grand *entrepôt* for everything, from an officer's haversack to a quartermaster's outfit, as well as a bed-chamber, dining-room, parlor, and reading-room; and the vast concourse of people who are constantly *en route* from or to some one of the scenes of military operations made it what it was. It was a most interesting sight, to be seated here and watch the different people who came and went, like the tide. Of course everything was under the control of the military authorities, and but few men were here save those who came armed with that authority in some way or another.

Birkill and his fellow-recruits were not allowed to enter the hotel, and Mr. Thomson had walked with them as far as he dare on their road to Camp Hamilton. Soldiers were everywhere, and the clean, bright uniform of the garrison contrasts strongly with that of those who come from far over the tops of the green pine-trees, to the westward.

But here is a group of men whose dress and manner indicate that they do not belong to the army, or, if they do, they are of a corps distinct from any branch of the service I have ever seen. Perhaps there are a dozen of them. They appear to be known by everybody, and everybody, from the greatest and most dignified general to the lowest private, has a word with them. There is a spice of jollity and nonchalance about them which is charming to look upon in these days of military pre-

cision, and yet the lines of thought are so strongly marked on each countenance as to indicate that there is more about them than is seen on the surface. Quick at repartee, and with a pleasant smile for all who come in contact with them, they wander about the grounds in a careless, listless manner, and yet I find that the smallest event is noticed. None of them are old men, not even what we call middle-aged men, and yet each wears a sort of indescribable air about him, which seems to say, so far shalt thou go and no farther.

They wear no uniform. Each appears to be clothed to suit himself, and with an eye single to comfort and convenience. Nor do they appear to be engaged in any movement which needs concert of action, but each moves about individually, except at stated intervals, and then they come together and engage in whispers most mysterious. It was this fact which first caused Mr. Wontus to notice them particularly, and as they apparently belonged to a class that he had never met before, he considered it his duty, as a corps of observation, to inquire who and what they were. Leaving Nidd still brooding over his troubles, seated on the cantle of a saddle which lay on the floor, Mr. Wontus walked to the clerk, and asked:

"Who are those gentlemen?" and as he spoke he nodded his head in the direction of a group of men who stood in the doorway.

"The men who make considerable of the generals and other great men," said the clerk, with a smile.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Wontus, a shade of doubt passing over his face. "Yes, but where did they come from?"

Our hero did not like to expose his ignorance, and approached the matter delicately.

"From every quarter. All the cities, North, East, and West."

"Any from New York?" asked Mr. Wontus.

"Let me see," said the clerk, leaning his chin upon his hand and gazing at the party. "See those two on the right?"

Mr. Wontus nodded.

"They're from New York. The one just outside, from Philadelphia; that little fellow, with specs, from Cincinnati; the others from Chicago, St. Louis, and, in fact, from all over."

"Engineers?" queried Mr. Wontus, softly.

"Engineers? I should think so!" The clerk laughed, and then added, in a mysterious whisper, "Bohemians!"

Now, Mr. Wontus had often heard of Bohemians, and had a rather indistinct idea that they were gypsies, or, more probably, natives of Bohemia, and he remarked to the clerk that it was really wonderful that the government would allow them to be at such an important place, in a military sense, as Fortress Monroe.

"Allow them to be here?" said the clerk, with surprise manifested in his tone. "Why, sir, they are probably one of the most important, useful, and powerful elements in the army. To be sure, they often disclose the news of an important movement, which may be wrong; but I don't think there is one among them who would do so willfully. In fact, I know them to have been blamed many times for disclosures of this character when they were as guiltless as you are, and when the very men themselves who made the charges against them were the ones who were really in fault and to blame."

Mr. Wontus said "Yes, sir," and stood like a man befogged. The clerk's language was incomprehensible.

"They are always ready," continued the clerk, "to do a good turn for a friend, and I often wonder at them doing so much for everybody and so little for themselves. I have seen men have them work for them day after day, at work which they couldn't do themselves, and then give them a 'thank you' for pay. But they don't often say anything about it (he lowered his voice to a whisper), although I know that some of 'em don't get more pay than will keep body and soul together. And then they are blamed for about everything that happens. Powerful? why, I'll tell you how powerful. Why, you see people can talk about their not believing anything they see in the newspapers, but everybody does believe, notwithstanding. Well, suppose these men undertake to tell half—just half—of what they could tell if they were so minded, it wouldn't take long before they'd have the people disgusted with about half the great men which we hear about; but they don't. Occasionally they may sail into a fellow who has been weighed frequently and found wanting, but that don't take place often, considering how many men of that kind we come across every day. And, just now, look at what they are doing for the government by encouraging

enlistments,—you know they could discourage them just as easily,—and how much they are doing for the people by keeping them informed of the whereabouts and condition of the members of their families who are in the army. Brave? as brave as anybody else. They go everywhere that the army goes, and have a good deal worse time of it than many of the soldiers, because they are entirely alone and unprovided for in any respect. Thanks? not much. If they do their best they have simply done their duty, and I've known men about here to speak in the severest terms about them because they spoke of them in a way that they richly deserved, but not half as bad as nine out of every ten men you meet would have done under the same circumstances."

Mr. Wontus had asked numerous questions, and listened most eagerly, but when the clerk had concluded he knew as little in regard to who the men were as he did before.

"Good fellows?" asked Mr. Wontus, by way of starting the conversation anew. "Don't carry any weapons, do they?"

The clerk laughed immoderately. "Carry weapons?" said he. "No. Why, don't you really know who they are?"

Mr. Wontus assumed a dignified manner, and said that he did not.

"They are Bohemians,—reporters, editors, correspondents for the newspapers. I'll introduce you."

Mr. Wontus stood back like a man who had suddenly touched the poles of a galvanic battery, and a mingled expression of pleasure and surprise came over his face, and he gazed at the group of young men in the doorway with renewed interest. "And these are the men who do so much of our thinking for us," said he; and then, turning to the clerk, he assured that gentleman that nothing could possibly give him more pleasure than to be introduced to the mysterious fraternity. The clerk called some of the gentlemen by name, and, as they came up, introduced them to Mr. Wontus by the names of the papers they represented, and, in a moment, Mr. Wontus found himself talking to them as if he had known them all his life.

The sun had so far traveled his path that now his face could not be seen, still, Mr. Nidd sat like a statue on the saddle where he had first seated himself. Thomas Thomson was standing in the roadway, engaged in inspecting the different

objects of interest that came within the line of his vision. And Benjamin Wilkins was gone, nobody knew where.

It now occurred to Mr. Wontus that it was high time that the baggage was moved ashore, and accommodations secured at the hotel. It was impossible for Mr. Wontus to say how long he should remain on the Point, and it was only after he had signed his own name and that of his companions on the book that he was informed by the clerk that he was very sorry to say that it would be impossible to accommodate them with rooms, but he was very glad to be able to say that he could give them meals,—at least just now.

This information was astonishing. For the first time Mr. Wontus commenced to realize some of the vicissitudes of war, and he immediately communicated the information he had received to Mr. Nidd. I have never noticed how cross a bear with a sore head is, or can be, yet the phrase is familiar, and I now say that Mr. Nidd was as cross as a bear with a sore head, and was commensurately disagreeable. Nothing but an immediate departure for home would suit him, and Mr. Wontus finally gave up endeavoring to persuade him to take a philosophical view of his affair with the guard, and started out in quest of Mr. Wilkins. It was some time before the factotum could be found, and when he was found it was on the steps of one of the many small buildings which lined the way from the Fort to Camp Hamilton. He was the centre of a group of listeners, whose eager manners and sparkling eyes told how interested they were; but Mr. Wontus called him sharply, and his story was ended most unceremoniously.

Directing Wilkins to secure the services of Mr. Thomson, and immediately have all the corps effects brought to the hotel, Mr. Wontus returned to Nidd, and found that gentleman deeply absorbed in relating to one of the correspondents the full particulars of his affair with the guard.

"And now," cried Mr. Nidd, bringing his right fist down into his left hand with great force, "I'll bet I can flog him; and I will do it, if I have a chance."

"Certainly, certainly, sir," replied the correspondent; "but then, you see, it is not the man's fault. It is his officer's fault, and *he* is the man upon whom you should wreak your vengeance."

"Certainly," chimed in Mr. Wontus; and Mr. Nidd, glad

to secure any honorable way of getting out of the affair, finally agreed that his friends were right, but avowed, in the strongest lawful language, that the next time such a thing occurred there would be blood spilt, and it would not be his.

Good counsel prevailed in the conversation which followed, and by the time Mr. Wilkins, with the assistance of a score or so of "contrabands," had succeeded in getting the baggage all ashore and conveyed to the *neighborhood* of the hotel (I lay some stress on the word neighborhood, because it was impossible to find storage for it *in* the hotel) Mr. Nidd had so far forgotten, or rather forgiven, the indignity he had suffered as to insist on all the gentlemen with whom he had had conversation taking a glass of whisky with him from his private flask. During this ceremony Mr. Wontus was loud in his complaints concerning the want of accommodations at the Hygeia; but his trouble was laid aside for the time by the generous offer of the New York *Morning Glory*, inviting him to a place in the "Halls of the Literati." Mr. Wontus, without knowing what or where this was, gladly accepted the offer for himself and Nidd, and what followed the acceptance must find a place in another chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEETING OF THE INFLATUS—WONTUS AND NIDD ARE INITIATED AND BECOME MEMBERS—A JOLLY TIME, WITH A STARTLING DENOUEMENT.

If the first floor of the Hygeia Hotel was full, the second was crowded. Not crowded in a wide or general sense, but crowded in that particular sense which might be called jammed, by those who are not accustomed to the peculiar style of dovetailing practiced by hotel-keepers in those localities where armies most do congregate. Every room in the house was full; so were the halls, so were the stairways, and so was the yard.

I think that I have mentioned before that Mr. Wontus was a deeply-grateful man; therefore it is not necessary for

me to reiterate the fact here. He was keenly sensible to the kindness of the New York *Morning Glory*, for observation and inquiry had given him to understand that, unless somebody took him in, his bed was likely to be the pebbly sands of the sea-side, or perhaps the proverbial soft side of a plank. He had no fears for the other members of the corps. Mr. Thomson was with Wilkins, and he was sure that Wilkins would provide himself with quarters without difficulty, and then Tommy would be taken care of.

Early in the evening our hero had directed Wilkins to hand over to the care of the clerk one of the largest demijohns, and when the hour came for retiring, he had fully matured his plans and decided that his new-found and very jolly friends should have a substantial evidence of his appreciation. The contents of the demijohn had been purchased for the use of the sick soldiers, and Mr. Wontus was loth to part with a drop of it; but he felt that common courtesy demanded something at his hands, and he sacrificed a principle to do what he considered a kindness. With thoughts like these he followed the gentlemen up-stairs, keeping the demijohn well concealed behind his portly person. The company should have a surprise as well as a treat.

The aeriform fluid known as gas was not among the luxuries of Old Point Comfort. So our friends and their new companions found their way up-stairs amid the refulgency of those luminaries called "dips," and were in high good humor. The literati of the Point were generally in a good humor, but just now the stirring events which were transpiring around them every day gave ample employment to their minds and pens, and they were comparatively happy. The hall of the second floor was reached, and all the rooms being full,—and by that I mean they were to be full some time during the night,—it was resolved that the regular meeting of the literati should be held in the hall.

"Sit down, sir!" said the *Morning Glory*, elevating his candle above his head that he might be better enabled to see, and pointing to one of the cots which were arranged along one side of the hall; "sit down, gentlemen. We are exceedingly glad to see you, but somewhat depressed in spirits at not being able to offer you more comfortable quarters; but really this grand hotel, although accustomed to a great many

things, is not accustomed to such an influx of visitors. Poor quarters are better than none, though, and you are welcome; make yourselves at home. The boys are not all in yet,—out on the war-path, I suppose,—but they will all be in presently." And the speaker went on fastening his candle to the door frame, while Mr. Wontus and the others seated themselves on the cots and such other furniture as could be found.

In the dull, flickering light of two candles the party presented a picture at once odd and singularly grotesque. The feeble rays from the candles but seemed to cast elongated shadows on the walls and make the dark background of the hall look thrice darker than it was. The solitary chair which found a place in the circle became a spectre as it marked its dull outline on the floor beyond, and as Mr. Wontus peered into the darkness and then cast a glance over the deeply-shadowed faces about him, he remarked, in an under-tone, to Mr. Nidd, that he never had seen anything so solemn in his life, which remark he recalled a moment afterwards, and excepted the guard-house at Washington. To this Mr. Nidd made no reply, but sat down on a cot which had been stretched across the hall for his accommodation.

"Ah, gentlemen!" cried the *Morning Glory*, after he had succeeded in fastening the candles to his satisfaction and was about sitting down, "if I mistake not, I have forgotten to introduce you to my friends,—*your* friends, friends of all of us. This is Mr. Wompus——"

"Wontus!" interrupted the gentleman introduced; "Wontus, sir! Wontus!"

"Ah, yes; excuse me, sir," continued the gentleman, in the most polite and affable manner. "Mr. Wontus."

The gentlemen rose from their seats and bowed, and all the gentlemen said they were *very* glad to see him.

"This is Mr. Diddler," cried the spokesman, turning to Mr. Nidd. "No relation to the celebrated Jeremy. The friend of——"

"Nidd!" cried Mr. Wontus, again interrupting when he heard his friend's name subjected to such a metamorphosis; "Mr. Nidd! *Not* Diddler,—Nidd!"

"Ten thousand pardons, sir! I really hope you will excuse me. I heard your name very indistinctly when introduced, and I assure you I am very sorry that I should have

made such a blunder. You do not look like a man who would be the owner of such a name. I might have known better by a single glance. Mr. Nidd, gentlemen!"

Mr. Nidd was inclined to leave his seat when he first heard himself called by—what he considered—the horrible name of Diddler; but the *Morning Glory's* serenity, together with his (Nidd's) want of knowledge as to where he should go in case he did leave, held him in his place, and he expressed himself as fully and entirely satisfied with the apology and explanation.

And then the company extended the same greeting to him that they had extended to Mr. Wontus.

The *Morning Glory* was a man of medium height, spare, wiry frame, and finely-developed head. His complexion had been light, but exposure had bronzed it so, that now, in the dim candle-light, it was a dark olive. His features were regular, and his forehead was strongly marked at the base by a pair of heavy eyebrows, which shaded and at times almost hid his sparkling blue eyes from view. A continual smile seemed to play over his features; yet each look and gesture conveyed to the surface every emotion, either real or assumed, which found a place in his heart or mind. He was a ruling spirit among his companions, and his presence was always the signal for a jolly time.

"Now, gentlemen," cried this ruling spirit, addressing himself to Wontus and Nidd, and speaking in a deep, serious voice, which was strangely at variance with the sparkle in his eye, "we have no strangers within the precincts of this hallowed circle. The halls of The Inflatus—the name of our association—are sacred, and none dare breathe the scented air save those who are bound by the ties of membership. As individuals, we stand like the planets in the blue arch above us—alone; as an association, we are as homogeneous as granulated silver; and it therefore becomes my duty, before going further, to introduce the members of our association, to explain certain rules, and to do certain acts, before you can be taken into the full embrace of our circle, which—

> Has made a brotherhood to tower,
> Erect and high, a sovereign power.

"As I have already remarked, the precincts of The Inflatus

are sacred; therefore its scented air is never profaned by the mention of a mortal's name. Need I say more than to mention that those beautiful, euphonious names, Smith, Brown, and Jones, would dispel the most charming illusion? Per consequence, as all men must be recognized in some way, we have ruled that the moment the club commences its session, each gentleman who is a member of the craft takes the name of the journal which he represents in this most sanguinary field, and holds it until he becomes the individual he was before he entered."

Messrs. Wontus and Nidd exchanged glances. The *Morning Glory* proceeded:

"I am now about to introduce you to our good fellows. Let me commence with myself. (Sensation.) As you have already understood, my name is plain Thomas Spadrick; but as I represent that most powerful and influential (cries of "Oh!" and "Draw it mild!" from the company) journal, the New York *Morning Glory*, I take that name, and am known by none other while I am here.

"The gentleman on your right," continued the speaker, pointing to a gentleman sitting by Mr. Nidd, "is the Chicago *Trumpet of Liberty*, an ephemeral sheet of strong convictions on both sides of every question. The next gentleman is the Philadelphia *Voice of Truth*, a paper noted among its few readers for the falsehoods with which its columns teem day after day, time without end. The next gentleman is the Boston *Illustrated Grape Shot*, a paper of large parts, limited circulation, but rather more able than any of the other illustrated journals, whose representatives are not among us now. This latter fact accounts, in a measure, for its greatness. His paper is able, and in it can be found the most heart-rending cuts; price ten cents. The gentleman who represents the Cincinnati *Falcon* sits here on my left. He can speak for himself. That gentleman there, he with the green spectacles and ministerial countenance, is from that diabolical and most infamous journal, the New York *Slasher*, a paper of no importance (sensation, and cries of "Don't!"); of limited circulation and no influence; notorious only for making a map of the battle of Bull Run answer for all the battles fought since that day in every quarter of the globe, each time underlined with the words, 'Drawn by our special artist on the spot.'"

"Successful rival of the *Morning Glory!*" cried the *Grape Shot*, in a stage whisper.

The speaker proceeded, without noticing the interruption: "This gentleman is the Cleveland *Bantam*, a paper of small size, but great liberality in point of salaries, and of astonishing perseverance. It employs, as you observe, only the very best talent, and was never known to back down from an assertion once made. The reverse of this is the fine-looking gentleman sitting there, just back of Mr. Didd—Nidd. He represents, or rather the Baltimore *Echo* sent him here; but since he has never been known to be fully awake except at the meetings of The Inflatus, I doubt whether he represents anybody but himself. However, I presume he draws his salary, and that's saying a great deal!" And the gentleman continued in this strain until all were introduced.

The smile which each face had worn during what I may be excused for calling the performance, now broke into a roar of laughter and applause, amid which the *Morning Glory* took his seat, and Mr. Wontus brought forth his demijohn from beneath the cot.

Mr. Wontus always considered himself one of the most unfortunate of men in a social point of view, for while he was extravagantly fond of fun of almost every description, yet, when in company, he found himself entirely incapable of contributing the slightest moiety to the general fund. He often tried to do his share, but his stories fell flat on the listeners, and when he essayed to repeat what he had enjoyed himself and knew that others enjoyed, his version was spiritless, and made everybody look at him in astonishment. In short, experience had taught him that he was a bad story-teller, and, like other men have done, and will continue to do, he made his contribution to the pleasure of the party through the gastronomic organs. In other words, he found men's hearts by way of their mouths.

I am not positively certain, and therefore cannot say with truth, that any of the members of The Inflatus saw Mr. Wontus produce the demijohn, which he had so carefully placed under the cot on which he was sitting, and yet I do not consider it presumption on my part when I say I am inclined to believe, taking the action of the members as my guide, that they did.

First, the *Voice of Truth* arose and stole silently away into the darkness. Then, in quick succession, as if by some pre-

concerted arrangement, mysteriously followed the *Slasher*, the *Grape Shot*, the *Morning Glory*, and the *Trumpet of Liberty*. Mr. Wontus and Mr. Nidd looked at the silent movements of their new friends with some astonishment, but ere they had an opportunity to express their thoughts upon the subject, the gentlemen came flitting back again, and dropped into their seats as silently as they had left them. The smile had faded from their faces, and a look of grave drollery had taken its place. Each held something in his hand, but in the uncertain light of the candles Mr. Wontus was unable to determine what it was, although he believed it to be a piece of glassware. For a moment the silence was only broken by the deep roar of the sea. The *Voice of Truth* after a time, rose to his feet, and in slow, measured tones, and with mock gravity in his manner, addressed the company:

> "Oh, speak, if voice thou hast!
> Tell me what sacrifice can soothe your spirits,
> Can still the unquiet sleepers of the grave,
> For this most horrid visitation
> Beyond endurance of the noblest mind."

Solemn voices: "The generous wine; the flowing bowl."

Mr. Wontus looked alarmed. His fingers nervously clutched the neck of the demijohn, and he glanced first at the *Morning Glory* and then at Nidd. The *Morning Glory* had his face turned to the ceiling, and Nidd's eyes were tight shut.

"Let us rise!" said the *Bantam*, in a deep, sepulchral voice; and the company, with the exception of Messrs. Wontus and Nidd, rose to their feet. Mr. Wontus looked more astonished than ever. He was about to ask an explanation, when he was interrupted by the *Grape Shot:*

> "Fill full. Why, this is as it should be. Here
> Is my true realm, amidst bright eyes and faces."

Voices: "All hail the initiates!"

As they spoke, the members of The Inflatus assumed different positions, mostly of a highly dramatic character, each extending his hand, in which was grasped a goblet or other drinking vessel, toward Mr. Wontus. The movement was sudden, and was not accomplished without considerable confusion, which confusion brought Mr. Nidd to his feet, and startled Mr. Wontus into an effort to extricate himself from the cots,

and fly. A dozen hands were extended to prevent the consummation of the movement, but Mr. Nidd's long arms outreached the others, and ere Mr. Wontus could recover himself Nidd had seized the demijohn and was pouring its contents into the goblets. Once filled, and before Mr. Wontus rightly comprehended what had been done, the *Grape Shot*, in a clear, ringing voice, sang a verse, commencing—

"List! 'twill be well for thee!
List! while I tell for thee
What magic spell for thee
I have in store."

At the conclusion of this, a chorus was sung, and the *Morning Glory* pronounced Messrs. Wontus and Nidd full-fledged members and fellows of The Inflatus.

I do not exactly know why, at this particular moment, Æsop's Fables should come stealing before my mind's eye like some fancy of my childhood, and yet so it is. I see now the first picture, as I saw it many years ago in a little book which I prized most highly. There are the boys, with frolicsome innocence depicted on their faces, playing at marbles in the shady path, with their kites, and bows, and arrows lying by. I see a man, whose hair and beard have been frosted by the hand of time, his tall and commanding form bending over as he watches the game with keen interest. His forehead, high and massive, bespeaks intellect, and his face wears the lines of deep study, yet his eye is sparkling and bright, and tells me that cultivation has not absorbed the nutriment which dame Nature had planted in the system. See! He stoops and plays with the lads as gayly as the gayest one among them, and their youthful happiness is rendered most complete by his presence among them in their play. But another character comes standing out upon the picture, and I hate him now as I hated him years ago. The new-comer is a man of scrupulous nicety in dress, and his features are rigid and severe. He gazes for a moment in silence at the game, his lips curling with a lofty look of mingled pity and scorn, and then he speaks to the old man:

"I am surprised, sir, to see a man of your years and learning, to be thus playing with idle lads like these."

He bends his haughty head, and the muscles of his face seem to fall into the grooves already prepared to receive them.

But hark! The old man, with a childlike smile on his lips, has taken up the bow and arrows, and is speaking.

"Sir," he says, his voice low and musical, "do you see this bow? If it is kept strung and bent all the time, it soon loses its elasticity, and is rendered unfit for use; but if you will unstring it every time you have done using it, and let it spring back to its natural shape, when you come to use it again it will possess all the elasticity and power of a new bow. So it is with the human mind. Keep it strung up and bent to labor all the time, and it soon becomes worthless; let it do its work and then return to the shape in which He who doeth all things well created it, and when it is called on to labor again it, like the bow, is fresh and ready for the task." The man I hate is silenced.

But why should this picture present itself to me just now? This question I have asked myself; but the answer is vague and unsatisfactory. Can it be that I have permitted my mind to wander among the haunts of the money kings of the world; among the men whose very business seems to dictate a solemn, or at least a serious, cast of countenance and demeanor? It must be that, for if not that, why should it occur to me that the men who are here before me now are the men to whom the future historian, and the patriot at home, are now looking for that information so essential to their success and happiness? Pardon the digression.

"Two corps!" cried Mr. Wontus, as a goblet was handed him, and Nidd filled it. "We are now members of two corps." And with this, he laughed most heartily,—not that he was particularly overjoyed with the fact of his being a member of *two* corps, but because he felt that it was necessary for him to do something to disabuse the minds of his new friends of any lingering doubt as to his courage and knowledge of men and things.

"It now becomes my duty," said the *Falcon*, "to announce to you, as a past officer, that you are members of our circle, with all the rights, privileges, and immunities thereunto belonging, and as such we now drink your good health, wishing you every happiness and good fortune."

"Here's to our noble selves! May our shadows never grow less!" And with this the company elevated their glasses and drained them,—Nidd and Wontus joining in the ceremony,—and at once proceeded to make themselves comfortable.

"It's a comfort," said Nidd, whispering to Mr. Wontus, "to fall among gentlemen like these,—smart fellows!"

Mr. Wontus nodded, and was about to reply, when the voice of the *Morning Glory* was heard above the buzz of conversation:

"The witching time of night," said he, "has come, when a song is in order."

Voices. "Certainly; a song! A song, by all means!"

"And, if I mistake not, brethren of the mysterious scalping-knives, 'tis the *Trumpet of Liberty's* turn to sing."

"Hi! hi! the *Trumpet of Liberty!* the *Trumpet of Liberty!* Let the band play!" And all eyes were at once turned toward the gentleman whose turn it was to sing.

"What shall I sing?" asked the gentleman, getting on his legs and supporting himself by the door-frame, his eyes wandering to the faces of his companions.

"I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls," shouted the *Bantam.*

"Why do Summer Roses Fade?" cried the *Echo.*

"Give it up!" said the *Voice of Truth*, as though a conundrum had been propounded.

Then followed in quick succession the titles of a score of other pieces. At last the voice of the *Morning Glory* demanded silence. The command being obeyed, he continued:

"Brethren of the gory locks, if I mistake not, the brother promised at our last meeting to furnish the 'Song of The Inflatus.'"

"Song of The Inflatus!" A babel of voices demanded the song.

"I've not written it yet!" cried the chosen singer.

"No matter; sing it!" commanded the chairman. "Yes, sing it. It must be sung, composed or not," demanded the company. And there being no way of escape, the singer explained how necessary it was that all should join in the chorus, which being fully understood, he commenced:

THE SONG OF THE INFLATUS.

Every day when all our work is done,
Good wine, we love good wine!
We assemble here and have great fun,
Good wine, we love good wine!

We indite strange things and history make,
We cause the globe to tremble and shake,—
And when we've done we're all awake,
And ready then our thirst to slake
With good wine!

Chorus.—We fight with lead and with steel,
Good wine, we love good wine!
And only 't beauty's shrine we kneel,
Good wine!

Unlike knights of old, as we are told,
Good wine, we love good wine!
We ask no fame but to make and mould,
Good wine, we love good wine!
We seek but little, but get much less;
We ask good wine our lives to bless;
We make much fame, that is, we guess,
For the men who love us, no more no less—
Than we love good wine!
Chorus.

When among ourselves we throw off the mask,
Good wine, we love good wine!
Which society makes us as a task,—
Good wine, we love good wine!
Wear to suit the tastes and days,
That like others we may have strange ways,—
At blinding those whose curious gaze
Would fathom the depths of future days,—
And partake of good wine!
Chorus.

Good fellows we love and will stand by,
Good wine, we love good wine!
Yes, we'll stand by them till the sea runs dry,
Good wine, we love good wine!
Then join in the chorus and make it ring,
For to be merry and jolly will always bring
A balm for every ache and sting
That may fall to the lot of this charmed ring,
While it sings of good wine!
Chorus.

As an exquisitely-wrought frame will make a picture appear more beautiful, so too will the surroundings of an accident often throw about the accident a charm, which, if seen under different circumstances, would be insipid,—perhaps disgusting. We take it, therefore, that the shouts of applause and bravos which rent the air at the conclusion of the song of the *Trumpet* were induced more by the peculiar circumstances under which it was rendered than by any noticeable merit

either in the song itself or the manner in which it was sung. Yet it answered the purpose for which it was intended, and the *Trumpet* was congratulated most heartily for his happy hit.

There was a sort of cloudy understanding in Mr. Wontus's mind that the song was quite appropriate to the time and place, and he therefore insisted on the singer partaking of the contents of the demijohn. This suggestion was acted upon not only by the singer himself but by the whole company, and Mr. Wontus was highly complimented by the *Morning Glory*, speaking in behalf of The Inflatus for his forethought in producing, unasked, that which was so highly necessary in the initiation of a new member, but which had generally to be sent for on those occasions, owing to the want of a common degree of understanding on the part of applicants for membership. It occurred to Mr. Wontus that *he* had never made any application; but he rose to his feet and thanked the gentlemen for their politeness and kindness.

Now, for a man to rise to his feet in a jovial company is generally the signal for him to be called upon for something, and in this instance loud calls were made for a song from Wontus. As we already know, Mr. Wontus was not much of a poetaster, but still less a songster; and he was at a loss to know what course to pursue, when his attention was attracted to Mr. Nidd, who was giving to the *Grape Shot*, in a loud voice, a sketch of a gentleman whom, from his description, Mr. Wontus recognized as Scribendi. For once in his life a happy thought struck our hero, and, in the most glowing terms that he could command, he referred to the superior vocal qualities of his friend, and hoped the gentlemen would excuse him, and allow Mr. Nidd to take his place.

It is probable that nothing would have persuaded Mr. Nidd to sing had he been familiar with the manner in which he had been selected; but he was not, for he had been so completely absorbed in his conversation that hearing his name pronounced by a dozen voices in chorus was the first intimation he had of the matter.

There are two things which I desire to mention here: one is, that while Mr. Nidd was generally very careful that he should not make himself ridiculous in any respect, yet there were times when he *did* become a little that way inclined; the other is, that I have never heard the jay-bird sing except in

the most distressing accents, and yet I firmly believe that this bird is Mr. Nidd's superior as a songster.

The liquor had had its influence on Mr. Nidd as on the others, and those influences were plainly to be seen the moment he took the floor and begged the gentlemen to excuse him: he never did sing; he never knew a song in his life. His voice was drowned in cries of "Nidd! Nidd! a song! a song!" And seeing that nothing he could say would excuse him, the gentleman cleared his voice, and commencing somewhere near high G, and gradually ascending, sang, in a minor key, the

SONG OF COLORS.

I won't wear the red any more, any more,—
I won't wear the red, Sally Jenkins, O!
I won't wear the red, 'cause it's the color of my head.

Chorus.—Buy me the tally-ally-i,
Buy me the double-row-sariberry-sic-a-
Jinny-hey-green-gown-tally-i-brown-berry,
Sally Jenkins, O!

I won't wear the yellow any more, any more,—
I won't wear the yellow, Sally Jenkins, O!
I won't wear the yellow, 'cause it makes a cow bellow.

Chorus.—Buy me the tally-ally-i, etc.

I won't wear the gray any more, any more,—
I won't wear the gray, Sally Jenkins, O!
I won't wear the gray, 'cause it's the color of the hay.

Chorus.—Buy me the tally-ally-i, etc.

It has been a long while ago since I saw on the stage the representation of a wandering minstrel, who was supposed to meander through the country (the scene was laid in England) and perform in his own peculiar way on the clarionet; and it struck me at the time I witnessed the piece that the musical talent, together with the tone of the instrument, would make the minstrel a most valuable auxiliary to a private lunatic asylum. The reason why I thought this was because I felt sure that those who were compelled to listen to the tones of the instrument, if not insane at the time, would soon become so, and those who were suffering under temporary fits of the malady would soon become incurable. I can only compare Mr. Nidd's rendition of his song to that minstrel.

To even guess where the gentleman procured his song is simply a matter which I number among the impossibilities. It may have been the treasured recollections of childhood, or it may have been anything else; but whatever it was, it was received with uproarious exclamations of delight by The Inflatus, and the singer sat down amidst the most impressive plaudits. Just at this juncture the other members, whom the *Morning Glory* had referred to at an earlier stage of the proceedings as being on the war-path, made their appearance in the hall, and Wontus and Nidd were introduced. Now, on the introduction of a gentleman or gentlemen to an assemblage such as this, it is not, as a general thing, proper to give either three or any other number of cheers; but Mr. Wontus, who had, in common with the rest, indulged rather freely in the contents of the demijohn, believed that it was incumbent upon him as a new member to impress the new-comers with the fact that he had not only been initiated but was a member in the fullest meaning of the word.

"Three cheers for The Inflatus!" cried the gentleman, placing the accent on the penultimate syllable of the noun, and swinging his hat wildly about his head. The cheers were given with a will, the members rising to their feet, and in the commotion which followed, knocking the candles from their places on the doorway, and leaving the party in darkness.

"Three more cheers!" shouted the voice of Mr. Wontus, apparently undismayed by the loss of the candles. But the cheers were not given. No; there were no cheers, for the war-path gentlemen, and by that I mean those who had just put in an appearance, seemed to think that it was highly necessary for them to make their presence manifest in some way or another, and from that moment the atmosphere of the hall of The Inflatus was sadly changed. The meeting had evidently reached its climax; and so deeply had Mr. Wontus been impressed with the ceremonies up to this moment, that he fancied that that which was now transpiring was but a part of the regular order of business, and hence enjoyed it most heartily.

Cots, which before the lights were extinguished were steadfast and sober, now reeled and tumbled in all directions, while beds and bedding, pillows and bolsters, flew through the darkness in such profusion as to not only effectually prevent the

relighting of the candles, but to make a position on the floor and perfect quietness the safest place within the hall. All this Mr. Wontus devoutly believed was a part of the ceremonies, and ensconcing himself in a recess he patiently awaited the conclusion. Others were evidently awaiting the end, for divers doors were opened along the hall and divers voices were heard to use profane language and shower maledictions upon the heads of all concerned. It so happened that it was a general officer's doorway that had served as shelter for our hero, and it was by that officer that he was discovered during the height of the melee.

"What are you doing there, you cursed rascal?" cried the enraged officer, opening the door and looking at the form of Mr. Wontus, whose outline could be indistinctly seen crouching against the wall.

"Sh-h-h!" whispered Wontus.

"What do you mean, sir? I'll teach you to disturb people in this style!"

"Hush!" whispered Mr. Wontus, soothingly; "it's not over yet."

"Over yet!" screamed the enraged individual. "It *will* be over, and will be over with some of you, curse you, as soon as I can find my pistols!" And saying this the form disappeared.

Mr. Wontus had cultivated an abiding faith in The Inflatus and its members, and having already seen a number of strange things in his brief connection with the association, the language of the enraged officer fell upon him like the singing of some harmless insect.

Mr. Nidd did not consider it soldier-like for him to desert the party, although he felt like doing so at the commencement of hostilities, and it would probably have been well had he done so; for not desiring to be an active participant in the lively scenes that were transpiring about him, he was groping his way along the hall, on his hands and knees, at the very moment that the enraged and savage gentleman who had gone for his pistols was making *his* way to the door. Now the light which came from the candle in the back part of the officer's room, and thence found its way through the open door to the hall, was no sooner descried by Nidd than that gentleman turned his course in that direction, with a full determination

to seek the hospitality of the owner of the room, and there await the end of the exercises. Holding his head well down, that he might shield his face from the missiles that were now flying through the air in all directions, Mr. Nidd did not notice either the form of Mr. Wontus or the enraged officer, who, in shirt and drawers, with his pistols in hand, was just making a rapid advance to the entrance of his room. The sill of the door was reached; Mr. Wontus's form had been avoided, and Nidd was just about congratulating himself on his superior good fortune, when one of those accidents occurred which so frequently turn our most pleasant anticipations to the bitterest disappointment. The whole affair had occupied but a few moments, yet, short as it was, there was ample time for enough to happen to make the condition of affairs most terrible. Looking toward the darkness, the officer could not see Mr. Nidd, and Mr. Nidd did not see the officer because he was not looking for him, and thus it occurred that just as Nidd was about assuming an upright position the officer reached the same spot, and in a moment had first trod on Nidd's hand and then went tumbling on him and prostrating Nidd at full length on the floor, amid the most startling vociferation from both parties.

The voices were strange to each other, and it was this fact, together with the hurt to his hand, that induced Mr. Nidd to allow his pugnacity to rise, and to clinch with his antagonist. What followed this cannot be more accurately described than to say that there was a severe struggle, and that during the struggle between the enraged officer and Nidd, pistol-shots were fired, and most alarming shouts rang out from the throat of Mr. Wontus and others. The light in the officer's room suddenly went out, and confusion was now confounded. Those of the guests who were annoyed before were now horribly alarmed; and the occupants of the different rooms rushed out into the hall, and as is customary, everybody asked everybody else what was the matter without anybody being able to tell.

"What's the matter?" cried Mr. Galumpus, the landlord, coming upon the scene in his drawers, with a light in his hand, flanked by a numerous corps of servants. Light settles a great many perplexing things in the world, and on this occasion it no sooner made its appearance on the scene than a meeker, milder, and more innocent-looking set of gentlemen

did not exist than the members of The Inflatus, and Galumpus received no answer to his query. A brief council between the landlord and some of the guests was now held, and it was resolved to advance *en masse* to the scene of conflict in room No. —. First came boniface with his lamp elevated above his head, and then followed a line of servants, the members of The Inflatus and the guests making up the main body and bringing up the rear. Stealthily and cautiously the force advanced until it reached the doorway, where it found Mr. Wontus flat on his face and partially concealed by a cot, which he had evidently endeavored to crawl beneath, but failed to achieve success owing to his aldermanic proportions; and here the party halted until the *Grape Shot* came forward and generously assisted the gentleman to his feet, and without further ceremony escorted him to the rear of the hall.

The noise and confusion in the officer's room had ceased, and nothing could now be heard but low groans and suppressed, long-drawn breaths. Which one of the participants was dead? Who had been shot? These thoughts, with visions of pools and running streams of blood, ran through the minds of the company, and the landlord elevated his light still higher, and looked in. The room was in a condition of confusion, but no blood met his eye. He advanced still farther, and at length stood inside of the room. The suppressed breathing could still be heard; but where were the combatants? No living being could be seen except those who had entered with the light. Of course everybody was in a quandary. Could the battle have been like that between the Kilkenny cats, where each participant is said to have swallowed his adversary, or had the gentlemen thrown each other out of the window?

"Let us look around," cried the *Bantam*, advancing to the front line, and at once a search was instituted, which resulted in the enraged officer being dragged from the recess of a closet, and Mr. Nidd being fished from under the bed. The assembled company had now found its way into the room, and anxious inquiries were made by the friends of each as to the exact amount of damage sustained by the participants. It was found that neither gentleman had suffered any considerable injury, although both were well-nigh exhausted. As the gentlemen stood thus in the candle-light, Nidd glared at his adversary, and his adversary returned the look with compound

"'IT IS A RELIC,—A TREASURE.'"

interest, and the scene was only brought to a conclusion by the first named suddenly rushing through the crowd and out of the house.

The officer soon after peremptorily ordered everybody from the room, and then it was that search was instituted for the person of Mr. Nidd. That individual was nowhere to be found, however, and where he spent the balance of that most eventful night is a mystery, which even Mr. Wontus has never dared to undertake to solve.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CORPS TAKES PASSAGE FOR THE FRONT—THOMAS THOMSON MAKES STARTLING DISCLOSURES, AND WILKINS IS DECLARED A CHAMPION.

No boat left for the North on the morning following the initiation of Messrs. Wontus and Nidd into the mystic circle of The Inflatus, and that alone prevented Nidd from immediately leaving for home. The terrible experiences of the day and evening before had left him without bodily injury, but his feelings had been so deeply wounded that it was found utterly impossible to soothe him. The wounds were deep, but their very depth seemed to steel his nature against every influence. He was desperate. He had spent the night no one knew where, and he was proof against all inquiries. In his remarks he was severe and caustic, and while his face was unexpressive of anything except determination, yet the short, hysterical bursts of laughter which occasionally came from his lips when the proceedings of the night before were referred to, told of the bitterness within.

A guest at the Hygeia, in those days, might make his breakfast on the flattest and toughest of cakes, or his dinner on the roundest of potatoes or dumplings; yet, if he secured enough to eat, and thereby satisfied the cravings of the moment, his meal was always a "square" one. Quantity, rather than quality, was the great desideratum, and it was no uncommon thing for a man to boast of his having made a good square

meal on "tacks." By this he would not mean that he feasted on a pound or so of those flat-headed, sharp-pointed little pieces of ironmongery which we occasionally find in most inconvenient places in our chambers. No, he meant a far different thing, and Mr. Wontus was delighted when he developed the fact that "tacks" were in reality not tacks at all, but were a sort of bread or unleavened cracker, which had been invented by some diabolically-inclined individual—who must have been a dentist—for the special amusement of the men who enlisted in the army.

By times the corps assembled, Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Thomson looking as though their slumbers might have been a little ruffled or disturbed; Mr. Nidd as before described, and Mr. Wontus flushed and nervous, but pacific. By dint of perseverance, and through the assistance of the *Morning Glory* and others of The Inflatus, the corps was enabled to secure a seat at the seventh table, and partake of flapjacks and coffee. During the meal reference was made to the scenes of the night before, which references, though vague, were nevertheless noticed by Mr. Wilkins, and some inquiries made, which, however, were quickly silenced and disposed of by the reproachful and warning frowns of Mr. Wontus.

"A boat leaves here for *somewhere* this morning, does it not?" queried Mr. Nidd of the *Grape Shot*, as he was about leaving the table.

"Let me see," said the gentleman addressed. "Yes, I think the *Veteran* leaves for the front at eleven o'clock."

There was silence for a few moments, Mr. Wontus consulting his watch in the mean time.

"We'll go in that boat," he remarked, with determination.

Mr. Wontus made a reply, but what it was could not be determined on account of the conversation which sprang up among the members of The Inflatus concerning the terrible scenes, the privations and dangers, which a man threw himself into when he persisted in going to the front at this particular time. The *Bantam* was especially horrifying in his description of affairs as they existed at Yorktown, and went so far as to declare that he had seen with his own eyes dead men piled up along the roadside like cordwood. Other accounts, as to how strangers were treated by the army, were given by different gentlemen, most of which were calculated to cause a man

to deliberate some before he ventured among the scenes described. But if the stories were intended to influence Mr. Nidd and cause him to abandon his determination, they fell wide of their mark. He listened, but his eye never quivered, nor did his face indicate the slightest change in the character of his feelings, and he left the room with his usual dignity. He was soon followed by the others, and after seeking the privacy of the bridge crossing the moat in the shade of the walls of the fort, a sort of council of war was held, during which the question of leaving for the front at eleven o'clock was discussed.

Mr. Nidd was not only positive as to the duty of the corps' leaving for the front immediately, but he swore roundly that, whether the others departed or not, he certainly would. Mr. Wontus was rather undecided. Mr. Thomson opposed the movement in the strongest terms, and Mr. Wilkins, while he was inclined to the opinion of Mr. Nidd, nevertheless feared so much for the welfare of Mr. Wontus that he was inclined to think Mr. Wontus's plan the best. He backed his opinion with pieces of his own experience in the many campaigns through which he had passed. But what he said had no other influence than to induce Mr. Nidd to refer in glowing terms to their magnificent and ample outfit, by the aid of which he was sure everybody could be made as comfortable as at home. The argument was unanswerable, and it was then and there settled that the party should depart at eleven o'clock, to take its place in the midst of the active operations in the field, in its legitimate character as a corps of observation.

Some days before the departure of the corps from the precincts of Fortress Monroe, some fifty thousand men and nearly one hundred field guns had left the same locality and marched up the Peninsula. This Mr. Wontus knew; this the whole country knew; and both the country and Mr. Wontus were correspondingly happy over the proposed immediate engulfing of the sundry opposing forces, which had been rendering the government and the people uneasy and unsettled for the past year. It was just such an idea as this that came into Mr. Wontus's head as he lent a hand in shipping the camp and garrison equipage of the corps on the steamer *Veteran* at the hour of eleven. The captain of the boat, as well as the provost-marshal, had questioned Mr. Wilkins concerning the

rather extra amount of baggage claimed by the corps, but Mr. Wilkins so pathetically pictured the sufferings of the sick and wounded, and so minutely described the many incidents in which such things were useful, that he led them to believe that the party was a sort of private sanitary commission, and, with that understanding, the baggage was permitted to pass without further questioning.

The parting between Mr. Wontus and the members of The Inflatus was most affecting; but with Nidd a sigh of relief escaped him as the machinery commenced to move and the boat swung off from the pier. Of course, it cannot be exactly known whether Mr. Nidd allowed the sigh of relief to escape him on account of his not having either heard from or seen his adversary of the night's adventure in the halls of The Inflatus, or for some other cause. At any rate, he disappeared in the cabin the moment he saw the boat fairly started, and, despite the persuasive influences of Mr. Wontus, he remained there in a condition of solitude and consequent quiet.

Wontus and the others stood on the deck and waved their handkerchiefs at the walls of the fort until the *Veteran* rounded the point and passed the huge piece of ordnance, whose muzzle looked to him like the opening of a cavern. A shade came over Mr. Wontus's face as he stood there, his eyes wandering from point to point and from form to form, which gradually faded away in the distance. His features lengthened, and he grasped a friendly stanchion for support. He believed that he had considered every phase and consequence of his journey before starting, but now that he was on the direct road to the scene of active hostilities, with nothing between him and death but the frail craft which rocked and trembled beneath him, his thoughts were carried back to his cosy little parlor at Mr. Diddler's, and all that was needed was a kind word to cause the tears of sadness which came struggling up to the surface from bubbling over. Had this occurred there would have been relief, but it did not. Neither Mr. Thomson nor Wilkins were concerning themselves about their master, and the tears were forced back into the heart, there to linger and evaporate at leisure. He was sad; and yet what was there in the world that he should care for, or would care for him? "What business have I here?" he asked himself; and then

answered the question by saying, "None at all. Suppose by any unforeseen accident I should be killed, who is there to shed a tear over my grave? Nobody! And if I was killed, the verdict would be, 'Served him right: he had no business to be there.'"

As he thus soliloquized, he looked around at Thomas Thomson, and wondered if that individual ever had such thoughts as he had.

Oblivious to all this, Thomas Thomson sat contentedly on the top of a pile of freight, and listlessly watched the loons as they went winging their way along the surface of the water, in their frantic efforts to clear themselves from the vicinity of the noisy paddle-wheels of the vessel.

"Come here, Thomas," said Mr. Wontus, after a time, dropping into a chair.

Tommy obeyed, and took a seat by the side of his master, while Benjamin Wilkins made his way to the pilot-house, for the purpose, he remarked, of seeing that things went right in the navigation of the vessel.

Left alone with Thomas, Mr. Wontus at once opened the conversation.

"We are getting there fast," he remarked, turning his eyes toward the shore.

Thomas did not appear to have a very distinct idea as to what Mr. Wontus meant; therefore he merely answered, "Yes, sir." And for a time there was silence.

"Thomas, you are seeing a great deal of the world," said Mr. Wontus, as though he was giving utterance to the thoughts which had been passing through his head; "you are seeing a great deal of the world."

"Resume I am, sir."

"I often wonder, Tommy, if you ever had a care,—if there is anything in your philosophy which at any time weighs on your spirits, and brings them down to that zero of thought which freezes the warm blood, and makes one almost wish that they had never been."

Mr. Wontus waited for a reply; but Tommy's head was turned away, and he looked troubled.

"Do you know what philosophy is?" continued Mr. Wontus, after a time, tapping his man's shoulder in a gentle, friendly way. "Do you know it?"

"*It!*" cried Mr. Thomson, suddenly turning to his master, and speaking with visible agitation; "*it's* a *she!*"

It was now Mr. Wontus's turn to be surprised. "Why, Tommy, my boy, what do you mean?"

"Mean, mean!" cried Thomas, as though his pent-up feelings were about to burst forth against his will; "I have never said nothin' about it, sir, but she's allers been in my head."

It was cool, and a fine breeze blowing from off the land, but Tommy nevertheless found it necessary to make use of his handkerchief, and Mr. Wontus was fairly amazed at the new and unexpected turn of affairs.

"I'll tell *you*, sir," said Tommy, recovering himself, and looking down at the deck. "I ought to of told you much afore this, but since you've guessed mor'n half, why, I'll jist tell you the rest."

"You're a fool!" cried Mr. Wontus. He was forgetting his own reflections.

"Yes, sir, an' I'll tell you jist how it come about." Mr. Thomson spoke with considerable vehemence. "You see, Phillis—she had a red head, but she was one of the peartist gals anyways round our neighborhood. Every mornin' when I was a-blackin' yer boots out in the yard, Phil used for to come a-peepin' over the fence,—it's mor'n a year ago since she first commenced it,—an' would holler boots an' make faces at me. At first I didn't took no notice onto her, but one day I told her I'd fling a brush at her if she didn't clear about her business, an' then she hollered boots an' made faces worse nor ever. I can't say I was mad, but next mornin' when she come agin an' commenced her foolin', I jist heaved the shinin' brush at her, an' the darn thing went over the fence into the yard where she was a livin'."

Mr. Wontus was all attention, and wheeled his chair around to have a better view of the villain who would shy a blacking brush at a young lady, but as yet he was unable to comprehend what the man was getting at.

"As soon as I chucked the brush," continued Tommy, playing nervously with the corners of his handkerchief, "I was sorry, 'cause the boots was blacked but wasn't shined, an' I went an' I peeped through a crack in the fence, an' there was the brush a-layin' in the yard, an' there wasn't a soul about anywheres, so I jist jumped over the fence, an'

was a-comin' right back agin' without disturbin' nothin', when some man come out of the house an' grabbed me. He said I was a thief, an' was just agoin' to give me to the polices, when the gal as which I had shied the brush at come to us an' swore that she was all of the fault of it, an' that 'air made the man stop touchin' of me an' tell me for to go about my business, an' I got over the fence agin an' went on a-blackin' the boots."

"Well, what then?" asked Mr. Wontus, interestedly, as Tommy ceased speaking and commenced twining his handkerchief into a small, hard knot. "What then?" repeated Mr. Wontus.

"Well, sir," continued the speaker, hesitatingly, "me an' her used for to talk every mornin' after that. Sometimes, when she wasn't there, I used for to wait for her, an' sometimes, when I wasn't there, she used for to wait for me; an' evenin's when you didn't want me, an' she hadn't nothin' to do, I used for to go round to Third Avenue, an' she'd be a-comin' from the store or somewhere (Mr. Wontus sighed), an' we'd meet an' have a little chat. I couldn't get it out of my head how she tooket all the blame on to her ownself when I was in her boss's yard, an' every time I come neerd her I felt closer an' closer; but I never felted as how she was so clost to me as since we've been away from New York on this here corps of observation."

Here the speaker fairly broke down. Big tears came into his eyes, and as he wiped them away with the sleeves of his coat, he looked so beseechingly into Mr. Wontus's face that it was with difficulty that that gentleman refrained from shedding tears himself.

Both master and man sat for a time in silence, but Mr. Wontus soon found his tongue, because he believed it necessary for him to show Mr. Thomson that such conduct could not be repeated with impunity.

"Well, sir," said he, "who was this young woman? Tell me her name, I command you, that I may write to her parents and acquaint them with her unladylike conduct."

"She ain't got no parents, sir," interrupted Tommy.

"No matter, sir," cried Mr. Wontus, assuming a manner which he certainly did not feel; "what was or is her name?"

"Phillis," said Mr. Thomson, meekly.

"Her other name?"

"Offley."

"Phillis Offley, then, is her name, is it?" demanded Mr. Wontus.

"Yes, sir; Phillis Offley."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Wontus, it just now occurring to him how he had come to unearth this most inmost secret of his servant's heart; and he smacked his knees with his hands and laughed until his face was as red as Mr. Thomas's handkerchief. "Ha! ha! ha! This is too good,—too rich. Where is Nidd? Where is somebody that can enjoy this with me?" And he turned round in his chair and looked about; but they were alone, and he continued to laugh most heartily, while Thomas Thomson looked on demurely, not knowing whether it was becoming in him to laugh or cry.

"Tommy, Tommy, my boy, you did very wrong." And here Mr. Wontus laughed more than ever. "Yet it was all wrong to keep such things from me; but then I knew nothing of the matter, and it would have done no particular harm—since we are away from there—if I had never found it out. But I did not ask you anything about that. I asked you if there was anything in your philosophy,—not Phillis Offley." And here the gentleman went into another fit of laughing, while Thomas commenced undoing the complicated knots in his handkerchief, his face wearing an expression of indecision.

A full and complete explanation from Wontus, together with sundry hints of a pleasant nature, soon put Thomas Thomson in a more comfortable mood, and the elder having evidently turned his attention to more absorbing questions, both gentlemen found themselves more pleasantly situated than either expected when the conversation commenced. As a single sunbeam will brighten the gloomiest day, so the little accident in which misunderstanding and Thomas Thomson were prominently mixed, served to brighten Mr. Wontus's thoughts, and here we leave them to their enjoyment, and turn our attention to the other members of the party.

Mr. Wilkins had proceeded to the pilot-house, as is the custom of traveled people, at the opening of the conversation between his employer and Mr. Thomson, that he should engage in conversation with the pilot there can be no question, for at the moment we take him up we find that gentleman (the pilot)

evidently endeavoring to outstrip Mr. Wilkins in the relation of a story, the concluding portion of which is all that finds a place here.

"You see," remarked the pilot, giving the wheel a vigorous turn, "we had just passed around Hatteras, and commenced to think that we were to escape our usual dose of storm, when Tim Brown, one of the best men that ever shook out a sail or hove an anchor, sang out, 'A blow!' We were sliding off before a good, stiff breeze, with every rag of canvas set, and as soon as we heard Tim's voice every man was looking out, sure enough. I was at the wheel at the time, and the captain was standing in the waist. I couldn't see anything, and was just about telling the captain so, when he guessed my thoughts and pointed off to leeward. I looked, and at first could scarcely believe my eyes, for right there, cutting clean athwart the wind, was the blackest and most threatening cloud I most ever saw, and it was coming to us like a flash of lightning. It was singular; it was unaccountable; but there was no mistaking it, and orders were immediately given to take in sail. The men jumped to the work lively, but it was of no use, for before they could get in a rag, the biggest cloud of mosquitoes went over us that mortal man ever set eyes on." (Mr. Wilkins elevated his eyebrows.) "Yes, sir; the storm was nothing more than a cloud of mosquitoes. Well, for awhile they made the day as dark as night, and when they had all passed over and the daylight shone again there wasn't the first patch of canvas left on the spars. The infernal things had stripped us, and left the masts as bare as a dead tree."

The pilot turned to his wheel again as he finished speaking, and Mr. Wilkins stood looking in the window. His face wore a puzzled air; and it was some time ere the silence was broken, except by the clanking of the rudder-chains.

"It was late in the month of August, wasn't it?" said Wilkins, in mild matter-of-fact manner.

"About the twenty-ninth," replied the pilot.

In a moment Mr. Wilkins's manner changed, and with a smile on his lips he extended his hand toward his companion, and said:

"Your hand, mate. I've been wantin' for years to meet a man that was aboard that ship. I recollect the occasion jist as well as if it was yesterday."

"You do?" interrupted the pilot in ill-concealed astonishment.

"Yes, siree, I do!"

"How's that?" The pilot knew that *he* did not remember either the accident or the day, and further than that he did not believe that any other mortal man ever remembered seeing such a thing, or that such a thing ever had existence in the world.

"Well, you see," said Wilkins, without paying any attention to the manner of his companion, "I'll tell you jist howsomever it was,—I recollect it jist as if it was yesterday. We must have been dead to leeward of your ship about twenty miles, I guess, when that same cloud made its appearance. I know'd what it was the minute I clapped my eyes on it, so I jist told the boys to look out for their eyes and not git skeered. Well, sir, they come right along and went skimmin' over us like the wind. I see right away that they'd been to some other ship, so I jist laughed and kept shady."

"Did none of them stop?" queried the pilot, with assumed carelessness, as Mr. Wilkins ceased speaking.

"Oh, yes; one or two of 'em couldn't go no farther, and they stopped, but most of 'em went on. It was a thunderin' gist of 'em, wasn't it?"

The pilot thus appealed to replied that it was, but looked nonplused. After a time, however, he asked Wilkins how he knew that the mosquitoes had visited another ship before calling on him.

"I knowed," replied Wilkins, complacently, "because each one of 'em wore canvas trousers, and a good sprinklin' of 'em carried with 'em travelin' bags made out of new sailcloth."

The pilot looked at Wilkins and Wilkins looked at the pilot. Neither spoke for some moments. The pilot felt that he was defeated, and Mr. Wilkins was sure that he had gained a victory.

"Stranger," remarked the pilot at length, "for twenty years I've had a reputation among watermen of being able to outlie any man that trod a plank, but I give it up; yes, sir, I relinquish all claim to the championship, and if you will only accept my knife, you will do me a great favor. You won it fair, by thunder!"

"Sir," remarked Wilkins, after a pause, "I lay no claim to

tellin' lies, and I don't want your knife." And saying this he cast a look of injured innocence at the pilot, and walked out of the pilot-house.

Mr. Nidd was still in the cabin. The beautiful sunshine and the fresh, salt air had no charms for him. His thoughts were far away, wandering among the elysian groves of fancy. His face was grave and serious, with occasional flashes of sunshine. These flashes always accompanied pictures in which the lovely Mrs. Squirm stood out in bold relief. The clouds which followed them were brought there by Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson, whose face always would come in and darken the brightest dreams.

There was a peculiar sort of tact about Mr. Nidd, which I scarcely know whether to admire or condemn. I do not think that he lacked courage, and yet I know that, despite his best efforts to be the contrary, he was terribly afraid of his thoughts. He seemed to belong to that peculiar class of people who were always treasuring and bringing forward the darkest and most disagreeable incidents in their past life, while the bright ones were hidden away. It was a part of his life to keep this fact from the knowledge of a curious world, and often, when he was troubled most at heart, his animal spirits fairly effervesced, and it was in this concealment that his tact was of value. I have always believed that he was excessively sensitive. Not that he ever betrayed any particular outward show of his feelings, but because I have always noticed that an accident wherein he was worsted was invariably followed by a condition of despondency, which in turn was followed by excitement superinduced by liquor or other artificial means. Sometimes this excitement would be of a boisterous character; at others it was nothing more than careless stubbornness. He was careless and stubborn now.

CHAPTER XX.

ON TO RICHMOND—THE CORPS AT THE FRONT—MR. WONTUS BUYS A RELIC, AND WILKINS MAKES HIS FIRST FAILURE.

For nearly a year the city of Richmond had been the grand point upon which the attention of all the people of the land had been riveted. With the men in the field, whose months of weariness and exposure had commenced to make them careless as to danger or destination, all places were alike; but to those who rested from the toils of the day beneath the shade of their leafy vines, or toasted their toes before the glowing grate, and were surrounded by peace, plenty, and happiness, the cry came forth, "On to Richmond!"

Ten thousand throats spread it to the breeze, and ten times ten thousand echoed it, until the very trees seemed to say "On to Richmond!" Those mercuries of public opinion which come silently stealing to our side at the breakfast-table had wafted the cry upon the genial spring air, and now the army was again in motion. Again, did I say? Yes, again. For three long, weary months naught had been heard save the monotonous, plaintive cry, "All quiet on the Potomac!" Ah, well may I say they were weary months. How many weeping mothers and anxious friends listened day after day, and wondered how, amid the storms of snow and sleet, with nothing save their canvas tents between them and the storm without, some loved one was resting wrapped in his blanket of uncertain warmth! But it was over now. The grand army of the Potomac was in motion, and a new feeling came to the hearts of the people and a new look to their eyes. Even the army itself assumed a new life. The odd mixture of gayety and misery consequent to winter quarters in the field was forgotten, and joy beamed from the faces of men who confronted death in all its varied and horrible shapes at every step.

Mr. Wontus was always perfectly sure that when once the

army commenced the forward movement it would keep steadily on until it possessed the capital of the Confederacy.

He had been standing alone gazing at the shore for some moments, when he discovered that the *Veteran* had suddenly made its way up a little inlet, and was just then being made fast to one of the numerous canal barges which had been used in transporting material for the army, but was now fast in the mud and serving as wharfage for the transports.

"What place is this?" he asked of the captain, as that officer walked by him.

"Cheesman's Creek; your destination, sir. You can go no farther by water." The officer had more than answered the question.

Exactly how far, in miles, Cheesman's Creek is from Yorktown I am unable to say, but I know that it cannot be very far, and I have two reasons for the assertion. First, because the booming of the guns which were hurling their iron hail into the town could be distinctly heard at the creek; and second, because it was one of the principal depots of supplies. I cannot say that there was anything either enticing or beautiful about the place, for there was little for the eye to rest on but shimmering sand and rank vegetation, with a background of tall, straight pine-trees, whose very regularity was wearisome to look at. Outward, looking toward the broad waters of the bay, were the oyster-beds, with their bounds fairly marked out to the eye by the rows of tall stakes which swayed and bent with the heaving of the waters; and this was all; this completed the picture.

Mr. Wontus thought that it was a masterly idea on the part of General McClellan when he ordered the provisional division of Franklin into this inlet, there to remain on board the transports, and wait the moment that the enemy should be driven from his stronghold, and then pounce upon him by sailing up the river, disembarking, and throwing the division across his path, thus placing him between two forces, one of which was on his only line of retreat; and he only ceased to admire it when the boat was tied up.

It was some time before Mr. Wontus could induce Nidd to come out of the cabin; and when he did come out, it was evident that his meditations had not improved his disposition; and I think now that the corps, after having taken a view of

the surroundings, would as lief have remained on board the *Veteran;* in fact, Mr. Wilkins hinted, distantly of course, that even the Hygeia, with all its distressing circumstances clustering about it, was preferable to the comforts that could be had among the sands and pines which surrounded them now. Mr. Wontus's face wore a dubious expression, and it was only after the pilot—who had guessed the state of affairs—had twitted them severely that the gentlemen made their way down the gang-plank to the deck of one of the barges. The baggage had preceded them, and a good portion of it was already undergoing a minute inspection in the hands of a squad of soldiers. It was quite a long while before the united eloquence of Wontus and Wilkins could persuade the men that the mass of stuff was private property; but it was done after a time, and ere Mr. Wontus was fully aware of what was going on, Nidd had departed, and was out of sight, while Thomson and Wilkins were busy in giving the men who surrounded them the latest news from home.

Wontus never for a moment believed that he was at all likely to be killed in the course of his observation in the army. He argued that as he had simply come into the field to see and render such assistance to the sick and wounded as he was able, there was no reason, that he could see, why even so much as a chance shot should come anywhere near him. In brief, he had no thought but that he would soon be on his way back to the latitude of Washington. With this idea firmly fixed in his mind, he was determined that when he did return he would carry with him such trophies and relics as would be indubitable evidence of his having been among the scenes which he intended to describe to his circle of friends at home. In this our hero was no exception to the rule, for of all the people who visited the troops in the field, scarcely more than one in every hundred returned home without carrying—or endeavoring to carry—with him some relic of the place he had visited. It was a sort of disease, and as Mr. Wontus could not be expected to escape its influences, I shall proceed to relate his experience.

"How do you like it here?" he asked of one of the soldiers who stood near him. The soldier replied, laughingly, that he supposed that it didn't make much difference whether he liked it or not, he would have to stay.

"It's pretty warm," continued Wontus, cheerily, by way of continuing the conversation.

"Well, yes," replied the man; "but not so warm as I've seen it."

"Ah!" ejaculated Wontus; "been fighting, perhaps?"

"Some," said the soldier, laconically; "took a little of Bull Run, Rich Mountain, and 'round Manassas."

"You don't tell me! and—and unhurt?"

"Got a little one in the thigh, and lost a chunk of this ear," continued the soldier, pointing to his wounds.

"How wonderful!" soliloquized Mr. Wontus. And then turning to the soldier, and speaking aloud, he asked if it was possible for him to secure some relic from some one of the men who had passed through so much.

"Why, certainly," replied the soldier, showing a much greater interest in the conversation than he had heretofore done. "Certainly; I've some myself, and I know others who wouldn't part with some of the relics they've got for anything in the world."

"I don't like to trouble you, sir," said Mr. Wontus, after a pause, "but I presume this would be a good place for me to secure some little mementos; could I see some of these things?"

"Of course," replied the soldier. "It's no trouble at all. Just wait here a moment and I'll fetch some to you." Saying this, the man turned quickly away, and in a few moments more was lost among the tents of the camp.

Wilkins and Tommy were carrying the baggage ashore, and Mr. Wontus found himself alone; that is to say, that although there were in the immediate vicinity thousands of men, yet of all these there was none that he could call a friend or even an acquaintance. Yet he smiled as he looked about him and endeavored to make himself think the horrors of war were visionary, for on every side soldiers could be seen enjoying themselves as best suited their fancy. Idleness seemed to be the rule, and our hero said to himself that it was no wonder that there was nothing done since nobody appeared to have anything to do. While he stood thinking, the soldier came toward him, carrying in his arms a heterogeneous mass of cannon rammers, belts, hats, shoes, and what not. As the man drew near Mr. Wontus's eyes brightened, and he advanced to meet him. "You've got them," said he, pleasantly.

The soldier was nearly out of breath, but as he tossed the relics on the ground, he managed to say that he *had* got them, and that he had had considerable trouble in doing it, as they were growing very scarce.

"Now," said Wontus, as he examined the stuff before him, "you must tell me about these things,—each one has an interesting and eventful history, I've no doubt."

"This," said the soldier, taking up a somewhat dilapidated shoe, which bore unmistakable evidences of having been but recently taken from the foot of the owner, "is the only relic in the country of a most remarkable event."

"Ah!" exclaimed our hero, examining the shoe critically.

"Yes, sir," continued the man; "it was once the property of a gentleman named Russell, and was lost by him while skedaddling from the field at Bull Run."

"Russell?—Russell?" said Mr. Wontus. "I don't remember any general by that name."

"He wasn't a general," replied the soldier, "he was the correspondent of a London newspaper."

"Yes, yes," cried Wontus. "I *do* remember now. I read his vivid description of the battle you speak of in one of the papers. And this is one of his shoes, lost in scampering away from the battle-field. He must have been going very fast?" Mr. Wontus spoke interestedly, and seemed deeply absorbed.

"Fast!" said the soldier, "going fast! You just bet he was. He hadn't time to pick up his shoe, and as I was standing by, and thought perhaps this was about the only thing about him that I'd ever see again, I picked it up, and have carried it ever since."

"What will you take for it?" demanded Wontus. "It *is* a relic,—a treasure." His patriotic feelings had been roused, and when he remembered how disrespectfully the reputed owner of the shoe had spoken of the government, he was determined to have the relic at any price. "What will you take for it?" he repeated.

"I don't care about selling it," said the man, doggedly.

"I'll give you five dollars for it," cried Wontus, toying with the shoe, and looking covetous.

"I don't care about——"

"I'll give you *ten* dollars for it," interrupted Wontus.

"I've carried it so long," said the man, regretfully, "that really I don't care about——"

"Here's four quarter eagles!" cried Mr. Wontus, shaking the gold in his extended hand.

"Well," said the soldier after a time, and heaving a deep sigh, as though he was making a terrible sacrifice, "you're a clever sort of a man, and I'll let you have it,—providing," he continued, as Mr. Wontus was about speaking, "that you let me have it back again in case I live to get home."

This Mr. Wontus agreed to, and the money was deposited in the soldier's pocket. "Do you want any of the other things?" he asked, looking cautiously around.

Mr. Wontus believed not,—at least not at present; and while he still stood examining his prize, the soldier quietly withdrew and disappeared.

"Why, he's left all his relics here," said Mr. Wontus, noticing that the soldier was gone, and that the rammers, belts, and so on were still lying before him on the ground. "He knows he need have no fear of me," continued the gentleman, proudly. And then, after some reflection and inquiry, it occurred to him that he might have been swindled. The soldier did not return for the relics which he had left on the ground, and this fact, as much as anything else, convinced Wontus that his purchase was valueless,—that the whole story was a fraud, and that he had been swindled. What would Nidd and the others say if they knew he had been deceived by such a transparent trick? He would never mention it! And he solaced himself with the belief that after all he was probably better off than most relic-hunters, and with a sigh he cast his treasure from him into the water at his feet.

The afternoon had nearly passed before the other members of the party made their appearance, and preparations were made for the first camp. It was wonderful. A sandy knoll had been selected, and Wontus, Wilkins, and Thomson were busy, under the superintendence of the second-named gentleman, in hunting out the different articles necessary for the formation of the camp. With a knowledge that he would be expected to superintend the raising of the tents, Wilkins had wandered among the camps which surrounded him, and had so far conquered the mysteries about a tent, as to know that poles, pins, and cordage were necessary to make one of them

stand upright. This knowledge he put to the best possible use by standing by and issuing directions as to where each article should be laid, preparatory to the putting up of the tent.

I have strongly intimated before that the varied experiences of Benjamin Wilkins, as narrated by himself, had about them, to say the least, the strong element of fiction; but now that he is so profuse in his orders and masterly inactive in every other respect, I have come to the conclusion that the gentleman was either entirely inexperienced or that his memory was extraordinarily faulty. Charitably accepting the latter as the real cause of his singular conduct, let me leave my speculations and proceed at once to describe the corps' first experience at the front.

I have noticed, and so have others, I suppose, that whenever the sun once commences to go down he goes down much faster than is agreeable, if you have anything which you wish to complete before he takes his departure. Well, this was exactly the case on the evening of our friends' arrival at Cheesman's Creek.

Nidd, more sullen and uncommunicative than we (I always mean the reader and myself) have seen him of late, sat facing the water, with his back supported by a tree. He took no part in the scenes that were transpiring about him, nor did he offer a word of remonstrance or advice. Wontus was most active, and with a view of stimulating the other members of the party, his manner was calm and cheerful. Thomas Thomson had scarcely comprehended the new life which was spread before him, and being subject to the orders of Mr. Wilkins and the suggestions of Mr. Wontus, his time, I may say, was fairly occupied.

"When I was in the Crimea," remarked Mr. Wilkins, with a faint shadow of doubt on his face, "our tents were pitched in this way." And as he spoke he thrust a ridge-pole into one of the large tents, and raised the end from the ground. Once having the tent in an upright position, he held it there, and then followed such a multitude of directions as to what should be done next, that both Mr. Wontus and Thomson bathed themselves in perspiration in their efforts to execute all the orders. But it was of no use, and with complaints long and deep showered on the head of the manufacturer, Mr. Wilkins

finally gave all to understand that all the poles, and everything else, in fact, had been made for some other tent, and that the gentlemen would be compelled to wait until he could procure new fixtures. When this came to be perfectly understood, Mr. Wontus was really a sad picture. Was there no house near in which he could shelter himself from the chilling night air which came fresh from the sea? He would be content without a bed if he only had a roof to cover him. He scanned the country in every direction, but nothing wearing the semblance of a house met his eyes. He had walked to where Mr. Nidd was sitting, and the sun went down as he did so. His lips parted as if he would speak, but just then there came up from the neighboring camps a sound which filled the air like sweet perfume, and made even Mr. Nidd raise his head and look about.

It was "retreat," and as the soft music came floating on the stillness of the evening, and echoing again and again among the pines, Mr. Wontus felt a thrill of melancholy come stealing into his heart, and he gazed in deep abstraction toward the snowy canvas city. By-and-by, as the sweet, familiar air of "Home, Sweet Home" brought strange fancies before him, like some shadow of the past, he rested against the tree, and a bright, sparkling tear came to his eyes. It was sad, very sad, and I have seen tears gathering into the eyes of men, on like occasions, whose eyes had never felt the moisture of a tear since childhood's hour.

The current of Mr. Wontus's thoughts was changed. When he first walked toward Nidd, it was with the evident intention of complaining of the conduct of Benjamin Wilkins; but now his heart was melted, and it was only with some effort that he was enabled to direct his men to spread the tents out on the ground and prepare some supper.

The first meal in the field came in for the strongest condemnation of Mr. Nidd's strong language, and he went so far as to hope that the enemy would come in the night and carry all of them to Richmond as prisoners. In vain the other members of the corps essayed to suit him. There was nothing right, and ere darkness had fairly settled down upon the camp Mr. Nidd had rolled himself up in one of the tents and lay on the ground, the semblance of a newly-preserved mummy.

With the going down of the sun the wind freshened, and

ere "taps" had sounded in the canvas city Mr. Wontus was chilled to the bone. He had ordered Thomson and Wilkins not to leave the immediate precincts of the camp, and now the three gentlemen sat looking at the camp-fires which sparkled and flashed in the distance, and wished, among other things, that they too might have a fire. But this Mr. Wontus would not hear to. His ideas of military life were peculiar concerning discipline, and he almost feared to move lest by some mishap or misunderstanding he might be shot down as a lurking spy or murderer.

Thus he sat as the night wore on, his thoughts busy with the past, present, and the future. The memories of the past were tinged with a brightness reflective of purity and happiness; and he lingered among them as one is apt to do when viewing the paintings of a master. He traced himself step by step from childhood up, and there came up before him the likeness of It,—she whom he had so tenderly cared for in Washington. He dismissed this thought as quickly as he could, and then looked out upon the future. It was blank and void, and while he sat trying to gaze into the maze of darkness, he instinctively gathered his wrappings, and, pulling the folds of the tent about him, sank into a peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

DETAILS SUNDRY HAPS AND MISHAPS, AND CARRIES THE CORPS TO YORKTOWN.

Mr. Wontus was astonished when he awoke in the morning and found that he had slept through the din of reveille, and that now the sun and a score of idle, curious soldiers were looking down upon him with more intent than was agreeable. At first he was at a loss to comprehend his situation, but when he put his hand out from beneath the tent and felt the cold moisture which had collected on the canvas during his slumber, his mind appeared to take in the situation, and he commenced feeling his limbs as if to assure himself that no part

of him had mysteriously disappeared in the night. The gentleman first raised his head and glanced around him, and then rose up to a sitting posture and rubbed his eyes with his knuckles. He had been performing this interesting and highly necessary operation some moments, when, glancing toward the water, his attention was at once riveted upon an object which he saw there.

Even now I can go to the ornithological museum and find no little pleasure in gazing at that strange, fantastic bird called the stork. His long, lank, greenish-yellow legs are to me the most astonishing part of his general make up, and I have often asked myself, when I saw the specimen wading through the shallow water, whether there was anything in the human family which resembled it. The same thought might have occurred to Mr. Wontus, for when his gaze first met the object which had caused him to cease rubbing his eyes and look with so much attention upon one spot, he was in some doubt whether the object belonged to the family *Ardeinæ*, of colossal proportions, or whether it was really a human being. It was Gascon Nidd.

The rattling of drums and the blowing of bugles had aroused Mr. Nidd at the break of day, and he had shook the dampness from off his coverings and immediately arisen. His first desire was to wash himself, and as there was no way of reaching the water except over the muddy banks, he had divested himself of his habiliments, except his red flannel drawers and shirt, and was now floundering through the ooze in search of some path by which he might return to dry land without taking with him such vast quantities of the mud as would persist in sticking to him. It was no wonder that Wontus was surprised, for Mr. Nidd's long legs and slim body, encased in tight-fitting red flannel, to which were added the long, swinging arms and hatless head, were enough to make even the natives of the region (if there were any) believe that he was some singular nondescript who had suddenly dropped among them from the clouds.

The gentleman in red flannel was still smarting under other wounds, to which the new dilemma certainly added no salve. The more he lifted his bare feet from the mud and endeavored to lighten himself by sundry contortions of the body, the more his feet would sink into it. Desperation finally induced him

to walk boldly forth, carrying with him everything that displayed a practical desire to cultivate so close an acquaintance as to stick to him. What he said to Mr. Wontus on drawing near that gentleman was of so forcible a character as to induce our hero to rise without delay and close his ears with his hands.

The breakfast which followed the first night in the field was not what might be called a very luxurious one; in fact, the corps, while it was provided with almost everything else, was without a mouthful of provisions, and had it not been for the persuasive abilities of Mr. Wilkins and the generosity of some of the soldiers, it is probable that the party would have had no breakfast at all. As it was, coffee, which Mr. Wontus declared wasn't fit for swine, and a few "hard-tacks" were partaken of, and then a council was held as to the next movement. There were just as many different opinions as there were men. Wontus insisted on pushing on farther into the field; Nidd would go to Philadelphia or New York; Thomson would prefer New York, and Wilkins thought that more could be seen in Washington than anywhere else. The arguments *pro* and *con* were strong and seductive; but, to the utter surprise of everybody, Mr. Wontus ended the matter by declaring that the other gentlemen could desert him if they pleased, but for himself, he had started out with a purpose, and he would not return until he had fulfilled it.

Thomas Thomson was the first to declare his intention to stand by Mr. Wontus, and after him came Wilkins, with the strongest asseverations that he had never had any other desire or intention than to stand by Mr. Wontus, anywhere and everywhere, at all times. Nidd never quit his ground for a moment, but it was plainly evident that while he differed from the others yet he was willing to abide by the will of the majority. It was a victory for Mr. Wontus, and our hero knew it and felt it, and preparations were at once made for the onward march.

But now a new dilemma presented itself. Here was baggage enough to fill a wagon, but no wagon. Hundreds of wagons were constantly passing and repassing, but it was only after great trouble that a bargain was finally struck with one of the teamsters, and the baggage loaded, with Mr. Wilkins detailed as guard.

The march to Yorktown was enjoyable to Mr. Wontus, for he chatted cheerfully with the soldiers that he met by the way; but by the time the party emerged from the pines into the rather pleasant fields in the rear of the right wing of the besieging army, Mr. Nidd was footsore and miserable. His feet had suffered considerable injury on account of the mud which had found its way into his shoes in the morning, and he looked vexed.

Once among the scenes of active hostilities, the gentlemen selected a comfortable spot by the side of the road, and awaited the arrival of the baggage, and amid the speculations and scenes which followed even Nidd forgot his misfortunes and became talkative, and Mr. Wontus was social and highly good-humored.

Noon came; but Wilkins and the baggage did not. The gentlemen had partially fasted at breakfast, and bid fair to repeat the ceremony at dinner. They wondered where Mr. Wilkins could be, but there was so much to see that it was not until late in the afternoon that the growlings of hunger bid them make the acquaintance of somebody who could tell them where something eatable might be had. The first man questioned on this important subject gazed at them a moment in astonishment, and then bobbed his head to one side and passed on. The question was a failure. Mr. Nidd now took the matter into his hands, and without further ado walked up to a squad of soldiers and entered into conversation. When he returned he had not only the information as to where something to eat might be had, but also had a verbal bill of fare, and geographical directions for finding the purveyor. No time was lost in following the leadership of Nidd, and ere many minutes had passed Thomas Thomson was freighted with a goodly quantity of food, among which the article cheese figured most prominently.

During the afternoon, the sullen roar of the siege pieces and mortars which were then being mounted with a view of reducing the rebel stronghold, and the constant marching and countermarching of soldiers, gave the corps sufficient excitement to enable its members to pass the hours pleasantly. Everything was neat and orderly, and but for the stacks of muskets which stood like bristling, closely-cropped hedges in the streets, many of the regimental camps might readily have

been taken for the bivouac of an extensive picnic-party. The men who were on duty were hidden from view by the woods just beyond the line of tents, while those who had gone through their share of the toil and danger in the saps on the night before sauntered about and talked of the future, when the land should be once more at peace, and the victors rewarded for their patriotism and fidelity. Here a party might be seen indulging in euchre, while each convenient stump furnished a desk for some brave fellow to indite a few hearty lines to the loved ones at home. It was a strange sight, such as was never seen in an army before, and such as will probably never be seen again. With nothing save disaster and defeat as a prestige, the men seemed confident of ultimate victory, and were merry.

Heavy mortars and siege trains passed along the road, but Mr. Wilkins did not. Long lines of wagons also passed as the shades of evening gathered, but among them all one was wanting. It was the one containing the baggage. Time wore on, and night came. Was ever a corps of observation so distressed before? Strangers to all who surrounded them, alone among half a hundred thousand men, three-quarters of the Wontus Corps of Observation sat, and asked themselves what they were doing there.

And it rained. A night of slow, misty, miserable rain is bad, very bad, in the streets of a city; but a night of rain in the fields is superlatively bad. It is even distressing when you are sheltered from its dampening influences, but when you are without shelter it is simply horrible.

I cannot undertake to follow Mr. Wilkins's every movement since he was left to guard the baggage on the wagons at Cheesman's Creek. I have therefore only to ask the reader to imagine the guard and the teamster both on very familiar terms and both gloriously and enthusiastically drunk. Mr. Wontus might have thought of it before, but it was not until the night and the rain came on together, and found them without shelter, that he concluded that that condition of affairs was within the range of human possibilities. He communicated his thoughts to Nidd, and received for a sympathetic reply that such was no doubt the case, and that he was old enough to have known better.

How the trio passed the night I must partially leave to the

imagination of the reader. Without a tent, blanket, overcoat, or other covering, the gentlemen huddled together at the root of a friendly pine, and there they sat during the night. Nidd's mind had evidently taken a new turn, for while they were sitting back to back, vainly trying to find a dry place beneath the tree, Mr. Wontus remarked to Mr. Nidd that it was terrible.

"Not much," replied Nidd, with savage satisfaction; "not much, sir! Very pleasant, I am sure, for a man who desires to gratify his curiosity; supremely pleasant, sir!" There was so much of irony in Mr. Nidd's manner that Wontus refrained from addressing him further, and from that hour until the breaking of the morning but few sounds broke the stillness of the night save the fire of the gunboats on the river as they showered their iron bolts at regular intervals into Yorktown and the answering shots of the uneasy foe.

To our friends the sound of screaming shells, as they went flying through the air high above them, was something so terrible that had it been daylight it is probable that Wontus would have chosen a safer place than his present situation seemed to be, and he was nervous and excited. Now he waited for the gunboats to fire, and when the report had died away, he drew his coat collar higher about his ears, and listened attentively for the dull inimitable thug—thug—thug, of the ponderous bolt as it sped through the air on its mission of destruction. Then he waited for the shot in reply, and listened to the echoing sounds which rolled and tossed among the hills and vales away in the distance. Occasionally, as a lull in the storm would give one particular shot a louder and more distinct report than another, Mr. Wontus would turn to his trembling servant and ask him if he had noticed it.

"There, notice that!" cried he, beneath his breath. "*Where-are-you, where-are-you, where-are-you?* That's what that one said. Oh, horror of horrors! Tommy, I fear somebody will be killed with this horrible firing." To this sage speech Thomson made no reply, and the night wore away without Mr. Wontus having the knowledge that he had closed his eyes in repose for a moment.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT THE GUARDSMAN SAID HAPPENED—WHAT DID HAPPEN.

THE morning came at last, leaden-colored and gloomy, and the three gentlemen stood, soaked to the skin, beneath the pine-tree, until the moving soldiers and the pangs of hunger warned them that it was time they were astir.

The long line of white-covered wagons was scanned in vain in the search for Wilkins and the baggage, but since each wagon resembled the other so closely, and none contained the smallest article which could be identified, their attention was soon turned in another direction. Fortunately, Mr. Wontus was well provided with money, and the soldiers were generous with their coffee, or the gentlemen would have been compelled to have breakfasted on cheese and water.

"Where *can* that man have gone to? What has become of him?" asked Wontus, as he sipped his coffee from a black and rusty tin cup.

"Gone to the devil, I hope," replied Nidd, as he walked about, with a tin cup in one hand and a great piece of cheese in the other, looking for a dry spot to sit upon.

"P'raps somethin' has killed him," remarked Thomson.

Mr. Nidd halted, and looked scornfully at the speaker. "Killed!" said he, after a moment's pause; "him killed? Not much. The bullet was never made that could kill him. He was born to be hung!"

"I hope——"

Mr. Wontus was interrupted by Nidd: "You can hope! but what does hope amount to when applied to such a consummate scoundrel as this fellow? You should have known better than to trust him, knowing his propensities."

"There he is now!" shouted Tommy, joyfully, pointing toward the woods.

Just emerging into the clear field was the form of Benjamin Wilkins. His chin was resting upon his breast, his hands

MR. WONTUS LISTENS TO A CONVERSATION, AND LEARNS SOMETHING.

jammed into his pockets, and his hat crushed down over his eyes. With slow and faltering steps he moved along, until he reached his anxious friends, and then stood like a culprit awaiting sentence.

"Well, sir!" cried Mr. Wontus, with dignified anger, "you have arrived, have you?"

Mr. Wilkins shrugged his shoulders, and, drawing his hands from his pockets, stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground, as though he would have said, had he said anything, that it was of no use to cry over spilt milk.

"You've evidently enjoyed yourself," said Mr. Nidd, ironically, taking a survey of his person.

To this Mr. Wilkins made no rejoiner, but raising his head he took a hasty glance at his angular friend, and again shrugged his shoulders. This movement was what Mr. Wontus had been looking for, and as he caught sight of Benjamin's face, he started back with an exclamation of surprise. It was plain now that the guardsman had been intoxicated. His clothes were torn and besmeared with mud, and his eyes were discolored and badly swollen. Added to this were sundry marks across his forehead and cheeks, which gave him the appearance of having fallen into hands which marked him well before permitting him to depart.

"Where is the baggage?" cried Wontus, angrily. "I demand an explanation, sir!"

"Could I have a mouthful to eat or——" He spoke most humbly, and tried to look with his bloodshot eyes beseechingly at his employer. The look had done the business for Mr. Wontus, and, much to the disgust of Nidd, that gentleman at once offered the new-comer his cup, and ordered Tommy to bring forth the cheese and crackers. While Wilkins was refreshing himself, Wontus wandered off and stood eyeing him from a distance, and it was plain to be seen that the old gentleman was determined to have an explanation as to what disposition had been made of the baggage. Wilkins's appetite on this occasion was easily satisfied, and as he gulped down his cup of coffee our hero walked up to him and renewed his demand for an explanation. As the guardsman was not in a very talkative mood, I will give his statement as he made it.

What Mr. Wilkins said happened.—"When you left," said the speaker, "I told the driver which baggage he was for to

load, and then, that I might be sure that everything was right, I took charge of the jimmijohn, and we mounted. Of course you know it ain't very far from here to where we landed, but somehow or another the wagon-driver, he lost his way, and although I done all that laid in my power to get us straight on the road again, it was night before we knowed exactly where we'd got to. As soon as I got my bearin's, you just bet we made tracks, because I knowed you would be anxious. Well, everything went on all hunkey until we struck the corduroy road, and jist there about forty men come out of the woods and attacked us. The first thing I knowed was that the driver was knocked off his horse. I was a-sittin' up on the wagon, and as soon as I saw this I jumped down and pitched in. But there was too many of 'em, and they got the best of me. They left me for dead, and when I come to, the wagon and the driver and the attackin' party was gone,—clean gone. As soon as I was able—for I'm kind of badly hurted—I started out to find you, and now I'm decently well glad that I'm alive."

Wontus listened attentively to the story, and then turned away. A moment afterwards he heard from some straggling soldiers

What did happen.—It was this: Wontus and party had scarcely got out of sight when Mr. Wilkins and the driver of the wagon sat down to a sociable game of cards. The game was kept up for a greater part of the day, and toward evening it was proposed that they should take up their line of march toward Yorktown. This movement they had endeavored to execute, but as they had transferred a greater part of the liquor from the demijohn to their own stomachs, they found it impossible for either of them to go in any particular direction for any great length of time, and finally pitched into each other and had a grand fight. They were ably seconded by the crews of some of the barges lying in the creek, and when through, were quietly laid away to refresh. While thus they were enjoying repose the barge-men had rifled the wagon of its contents, and passed the vehicle itself over to the military authorities, and that was all.

It was seldom that Mr. Wontus indulged in swearing, but he did swear now, and looked around for Nidd, with whom he desired to consult as to the proper course of action to be taken

in the premises. But Nidd was gone. He had departed a few moments after Wilkins's arrival. Unable to find him, Mr. Wontus consulted with himself, and concluded to discharge Wilkins forthwith. But he never put his resolution into effect. He never had the heart to do anything that would harm anybody. He informed the guardsman of his intention, but the guardsman's appeals were calculated to melt harder substances than Mr. Wontus's heart, and he ended the matter by excusing him, provided it should never occur again.

The day was spent by Mr. Wontus and Tommy in inspecting the works near at hand, and when night came our hero and his man found themselves the guests of the Rev. Mr. Gospill, of the —th New York. Mr. Wontus scarcely knew how he had become acquainted with the reverend gentleman, but he was delighted with his new companion, and gladly accepted the gentleman's invitation to make his (the chaplain's) tent his home as long as circumstances would permit. Through the same kind friend, Nidd and Wilkins were furnished with a tent near at hand, and thus the corps was provided for.

There were some amusing things connected with the relationship which now existed between Nidd and Wilkins which cannot find a place here, and for the record of the few days which followed we must again have recourse to Mr. Nidd's note-book.

[EXTRACT]

BEFORE YORKTOWN, *Thursday*, *May* 1.—Wontus and Thomson fixed with a minister; the wretch Wilkins and myself live together. Wontus furnishes the table. Everything pretty good considering the war. No peace at night; thundering roar of cannons and scream of shells all night. Wonder how the soldiers stand it; can't sleep for the noise. Great preparations being made by McClellan for taking the enemy's lines. Was out in a sap to-day. Men make the saps and rifle-pits at night, and then lie in them all day, firing at the enemy's gunners; great thing, but very dangerous. Sometimes two parties—one from each side—have selected the same ground for a rifle-pit during the day, and go out under cover of the darkness to make the work; meet and fight in the dark. Ugh! Men go out at night full of life and good humor, and come back dead in the morning, shot, or stuck with a bayonet. Nobody makes much account of it. It makes me sad, but

what I write here I never mention. Members of the corps are seeing the sights as best suits their fancy. Could write a book about what I see, but will not.

Friday, May 2.—Making many acquaintances; called on a number of generals; been received so-so by some, and very pleasantly by others. Have found the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee. One is an officer of the regular army, and the other isn't. Notice many rather singular things, and hear some surprising conversations. Come to the conclusion that military genius is composed of three essentials: pluck, luck, and perseverance; don't believe there is anything else in it except what any man of common sense and gumption would do without being educated to it. Know that this idea would be unpopular, and therefore sha'n't mention it.

Heard a general say that he didn't like to fire into Magruder; Magruder was an old classmate and a good fellow. Been wondering if he was in earnest, and if he would cease firing in case his classmate was endangered by it. Very singular, and yet remarks of a similar character are plenty in many circles. Don't expect a soldier to condemn his foe simply because he is his foe, but can't help feeling that there is more in these remarks than appears on the surface. Thought I would write to Mr. Lincoln, but have changed my mind.

Don't believe a man can or will fight and do his best if his heart is not in the cause. Have concluded that some of our high officers are here for fame. Hope they may get it, but not at the expense of somebody else.

Saw General McClellan to-day. Splendid gentleman, and is fairly worshiped by the men. Believe him to be a good man; think he dislikes to spill human blood. Very commendable, but not of much value in war. Soldiers everywhere, and more coming in all the time. The day is drawing near when we shall crush the rebellion like a wisp of straw.

Saturday, May 3.—Terrible firing all last night: listened to the shells flying through the air, and then felt the sides of the tent. Concluded that the tent wouldn't prevent the shells from striking me. Horrible thought.

Been wondering why I haven't heard from [erasures] Philadelphia. Very strange. Perhaps Scribendi? We shall see. I believe him to be a man of craven spirit and devoid of principle. Time only is necessary to develop him.

The preparations for the grand assault still go on. Men and large mortars were mounted last evening; the trenches are nearly finished; the soldiers are in good spirits, and the hour of victory seems to draw near. Would to Heaven that I could think so! Am I a skeptic, or do I lack confidence in the ability of the government and the courage and endurance of the people? Yes, I lack confidence. I would believe in some men if I could; but I cannot. But, since the country is blind to their faults and shortcomings, should I complain? No!

Sunday, May 4.—I think I am disconcerted this morning. Have had an unexpected shock.

The enemy have evacuated their works. They did it well. It was a masterly movement,—and we never thought of such a thing until an hour since (four o'clock).

Like a coward, he has stolen away in the night. But he did it well, and I give him credit for it. It was deeply strategic. But the troops at Cheesman's Creek! Ah! I had most forgotten. I see it all; but still I fear. They will go up the river on their boats; but will they head him off? There is the question which troubles me.

Wontus is a simpleton. He does nothing but laugh, and declare that the war is already ended. He says we must be in at the death. We move immediately. Our troops are in hot pursuit.

And it rained!

I have read of the battles of Waterloo, of Inkerman, of Lowositz, of Rossbach, of Kollin, of Bunker Hill, of Monmouth, of Monterey, of Puebla, of Sedan, and countless others, and from these readings, and the prints I have gazed upon with so much interest, I painted my first pictures of the horrors, glories, and beauties of war.

The corps had marched to Williamsburg, and were willing to confess that they had been most miserably, most shamefully, deceived. They looked for the gallant general, whose waving plume and prancing horse was thought to be foremost in the fray, but have been disappointed. True, they saw him; but he was such a miserable-looking man, and his horse was so quiet and submissive, that they should not have known him had they not been so informed. They have looked for

the soldier on foot, who struggles among a score of men, with no arms save a broken musket, to do battle against a score of savage, blood-thirsty foes; but they haven't seen him either, and yet they have seen much that is painful and heart-rending to behold. All the blood and misery was there, and it was easily to be seen that Mr. Wontus was seriously disappointed in his first battle. The pictures from which he had formed his ideas of a battle-field were faulty.

The rain fell in slow and easy, but drenching, showers, and as the drenched and weary lines filed past him to take their places where the fire was hottest and the danger most imminent, he fell to regretting that his store of liquors and other comforts which he had intended for just such occasions was gone—had been swallowed by Wilkins. He was about to remark something concerning the loss of the stores, when his attention was attracted to Mr. Nidd. That gentleman, who had been sitting on a stone by the roadside, had got upon his feet, and, with glaring eyes, was scanning a troop of horsemen who were passing. I have heard of people "looking daggers" at other people, and if such a thing can be, I am sure that Nidd was "looking daggers" either at the troop of horse collectively, or at some one of the horsemen individually. Entirely heedless of Mr. Nidd or his manner, the troop passed on, but it was not until they were obscured from view by the mist and rain that he took his eyes from them.

"Did you see that?" he cried, turning to Wontus. "Did you see that? The infernal scoundrel! And here we are, weary and wet, and on foot, without a living soul to ask us to even take so much as a smile, while that fellow is mounted, and riding along like a prince."

"Why, what?" queried Mr. Wontus, entirely unable to comprehend the meaning of his friend's strange language. For himself, he had seen nothing about the cavalcade more than a cluster of generals, and as it was no unusual thing to see clusters of these gentlemen, Mr. Wontus thought nothing of it. He stood looking at Nidd in silence.

"Didn't you see him?" cried Nidd, guessing Wontus's thoughts; "didn't you see him?"

"Who?"

"Mr. Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson." And Nidd fairly hissed the name from between his teeth.

Wilkins had taken refuge behind the trunk of a large oak, which stood just where the principal tributary of King's Creek is crossed by the Yorktown road, and sat with the tree between the foe and himself. Thus far most of the heavy firing had been done near where the Warwick road enters the town, but now the right wing, which had been creeping up through the wet, tangled grass in the fields almost within sight of the York River, commenced to show itself to the enemy, and was received with a furious cannonade. It was just at this moment that Mr. Nidd had undertaken to explain his conduct to Wontus more fully, when a screaming but "lazy" shell came screaming through the air, and almost at the same moment the entire corps, without waiting for a word of command, commenced an accelerated march in the direction of Yorktown. Troops lined every road and by-path, and hundreds of wagons littered the roads. The mud was deep and traveling bad, but the furious firing which was constantly kept up in the rear, induced our hero and his friends to press onward, regardless alike of the roads and the men who thronged them. Nor did they question each other for the seeming haste. I cannot say that the corps was frightened, but I can say that, with the exception of Mr. Wilkins, they were disappointed. And it rained.

Yorktown was reached early in the evening, and by that time the firing had nearly ceased, and couriers were arriving, who related to anxious crowds of listeners that the enemy would be held in his position for the night, and the fight continued on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A NEW CHARACTER INTRODUCED, AND AN OLD STORY RECALLED.

THE morning following the battle of Williamsburg was clear and beautiful, and the wet leaves and grass glittered in the sunlight as though made of wax. Wontus and his party had spent the night in a hut near the landing, and, with the

exception of the recollection of the thorough ducking they had received the day before, were in fine trim. Among the first Union men who had planted their feet on the landing at Yorktown after the evacuation was a sutler, and through his instrumentality, or rather through his store, the gentlemen had been enabled to refresh themselves.

The army sutler was a peculiar institution, and the reason why he was peculiar was because he had made up his mind to be peculiar before he left home. Like the vulture and turkey-buzzard, he was a necessary evil. To fight was none of his business; to die was out of his calculations—he had come to the army to live and fatten, and if he failed it was certainly more the result of accident than intention. The first principle in his business was to buy cheap and sell dear, and he was never known to violate those principles in the slightest; and he was always happiest when others were most unhappy, and that was when delicacies in the surrounding country were scarce and his stock was full. He would sell anything; his whole life appeared to be a sell on a grand scale, and he was ever ready to part with anything, except his life, at the shortest notice, provided always that collateral of sufficient weight and bulk could be seen within easy reach. A clever volume might be written about him, and—but I must "On to Richmond."

I must leave my readers to imagine what the evacuated town looked like, and to imagine Mr. Nidd and the others—Wontus excepted—loaded down with relics. Nor can I relate the adventures of the gentlemen in search of the deadly torpedoes, which the foe had ingeniously hidden in every place where they were most likely to be found. All these things I must pass over, and proceed to state at once that, after the gentlemen had become thoroughly dry and well rested, they took a retrospective glance over the scenes and incidents of the past twenty-four hours, and concluded that everything was much better than they had reason to expect.

It was noon. Mr. Wontus sat on the wharf-log at the landing, and waited for the news to come which should tell him of the annihilation or capture of the entire rebel army on the Peninsula. He had every reason to expect this, because he had heard from good authority that such was the intention of the commander. But he was disappointed here again, for

instead of hearing of the capture of the enemy, he heard with amazement that he had quietly slipped away from our hands in the night, and was now well on his way toward the interior.

"It avails nothing," cried Wontus, a moment after he had heard the news.

Nidd and the soldiers standing about looked at him in astonishment.

"No, gentlemen; it avails nothing. He cannot escape."

"He has escaped!" interrupted Nidd, dogmatically.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Wontus, rubbing his hands in great glee; "you've forgot the other army, on the transports, held back on purpose for this occasion. It has gone up the river, and by this time is standing like a wall of fire between the flying rebels and the haven of rest."

The bystanders remarked that Mr. Wontus was correct, and from that moment nothing would suit him but the immediate departure of the party for the new scene of action.

"What! so close as we are to the scene, and not be there when the final blow is struck! Why, Nidd, I'm astonished! Why, what would the people at home say if we were to leave just at the very moment that the rebellion is about to be brought to a close? Of course we will go!"

This argument had the desired effect, and four o'clock in the afternoon found the four gentlemen on one of the transports heading for West Point. For further particulars, see the notes of Gascon Nidd:

[EXTRACT.]

Tuesday, May 6.—On board the fine steamer *C. Vanderbilt.* Wilkins's cheek secured the passage. Things comfortable. Whisky in great abundance. No water. Scenery fine and safe. Gunboats just ahead of us, throwing occasional shells into the woods and other places where an enemy might be lurking. Wontus a fit subject for lunatic asylum. Wilkins in a beastly state of intoxication; has related seven chapters of lies to the captain of the boat, and is taken, by more than half the people on the boat, for the head of our party.

Evening.—Have cast anchor among a number of other vessels. Have no idea where we are. Have a place to sleep, and will proceed to occupy it.

Wednesday, May 7.—Was awakened by Wontus at day-

break. Went on shore immediately. Fell in with lot of men boiling meat and coffee. Eat a hearty breakfast with them. Is this West Point? No point here. West Point is just opposite to us. Firing!

On landing from the transport Mr. Wontus had hastily partaken of some of the strong salt beef and stronger coffee, which the soldiers had kindly volunteered to give him, and immediately after stepped up the sloping, grassy bank, and scanned the country. Before him lay a beautiful, level plain, here and there dotted with the white tents of the troops who had landed the evening before. On each side, and in front, the plain was fringed by a thick wood, which entirely hid from view the little rivulets which flowed sluggishly along and mingled their waters with those of the York on either flank of the line of white tents. The country to the right was level, and the glittering waters of the rapid Pamunkey could be seen through the trees, flashing like a mirror as it wound its serpentine course in the direction of the mountains far beyond. On the left, and perhaps a half-mile distant from the line of tents, was a steep bluff surmounted by a house, and beyond that was the forest, symmetrical and unbroken.

The spot was one of surpassing beauty, and Mr. Wontus drank in the loveliness of the scene, and lost all consciousness of war and its attending horrors in the contemplation of pure, innocent nature. Ah! how many brave, noble-minded fellows, he sighed, whose natures and education fitted them for the enjoyment of just such scenes as these, lie buried beneath the very branches which they looked upon and carried to their hearts as a solace to the misery which war, cruel, inhuman war had thrown about them? Thousands!

Wontus had fallen into a deep reverie, from which he was suddenly aroused by the bang and clatter of musketry. In a breath he called Nidd, Thomson, and Wilkins, and in a moment after wondered why he had done so.

At first the shots were scattering, and Mr. Wontus commenced to hope that it was a returning picket-party who were firing off their pieces; but the soldiers knew better than that, and when the long lines of blue commenced moving silently through the haze of early morning out from among the tents, our hero guessed the truth, and looked wonderingly at the transports, whose decks were crowded with men, as they rode

silently and solemnly at anchor in mid-river. Did these men belong to the division which was to stand like a wall across the path of the flying enemy, or were they reinforcements? He had little or no knowledge of what is called the science of war, but common sense taught him that if these were the men who were to constitute the wall, it was time they were moving; he wondered why they had not moved before. Not having any positive knowledge of the exact condition of affairs, he chose to believe that the men on the transports were reinforcements, and that the division which had been selected for the purpose was already standing across the track of the retreating foe. It was a comfortable thought, and he enjoyed it. The army needed a success; the country needed a success; and Mr. Wontus felt sure that the time had come when the brilliant expectations of months were to be realized.

As the sun rose up from behind the trees, the fire, which had been desultory and uncertain, became more regular, and volley after volley broke upon the air. It came no nearer, nor was it farther off. What could it mean? Informing the others of his intentions, and bidding Tommy accompany him, our hero walked through the deserted streets of the camp and onward over the plain in the direction of the firing, which became heavier as he progressed. As he walked, he turned and glanced at the vessels in the river, and was delighted with the fact that at last the troops were disembarking and coming to the assistance of those already engaged in battle.

In the centre of the plain a barn of rough-hewn logs stood, like a huge, grim sentinel, and toward this structure Mr. Wontus bent his footsteps. It is not known that Wontus was a coward, nor is it known that he was a brave man, except when under some extraordinary excitement, but he wisely selected the strong logs of the barn as a proper place for a corps of observation to take its stand.

The fight went on, but nowhere could an enemy be seen. For a time the lines of blue-coated men stood immovable, and then they moved off briskly into the thick woods, only to be received by a withering fire from a hidden foe. The wounded men were carried to the rear by the members of the regimental bands; and now, for the first time, Mr. Wontus was made acquainted with the fact that instead of forming a wall of fire across the line of retreat of the enemy, the enemy had actually

placed a wall before us, and but for the gunboats would have driven us into the river; as it was, a section of artillery had made its way to the bluff on the extreme left, and for a time threatened the destruction of the fleet of transports. The gunboats, however, thoroughly alive to the necessities of the occasion, opened their iron mouths, and belched such a shower of iron hail upon the battery, that it was compelled to retire. The battle soon after ceased by the withdrawal of the enemy.

Wontus had been so deeply absorbed in the workings of a battery planted near the barn, that it was not until he heard a particular name mentioned that he cast his eyes over the wounded men who were lying spread upon the ground in the shade of its shelter.

"Are you hurt bad, colonel?" asked a poor fellow who was sitting near, binding up a wound in his ankle.

There was no answer.

"Who is he?" asked one of the musicians, who had been diligently engaged carrying water to the wounded. "Who is he?"

"Colonel Blakely,—Colonel Lathrop Blakely, of the —th Ohio. He came up in the night, and when the fight commenced to be pretty brisk, got a lot of men together and led them into that hell-trap there by the fence. They thought it was smart to lay in the brush behind them rails, but it weren't; anybody could do that that was coward enough to think of it."

"I don't think he's hurt badly," remarked the surgeon, who was examining the colonel; "only faint from loss of blood; no bones appear to be broken."

"Doctor," remarked the soldier with the wounded ankle, mixing up his own troubles with the solicitude he felt for another, "I hope he ain't hurt much—this confounded thing bleeds so—good men are scarce, you know—I can't stop the thunderin' bleeding—he comes from the same town I do—see here, ain't you got one of them turneykets with you?—where's he hit, anyhow? I saw one of them Mississippi fellers go for him—I had it pretty well tied, darn it, look at that!—I seen him fall, too, but I got this feller about that time, and I don't know whether he was stuck with a knife or hit with a bullet —see here, doc., this thing won't amount to much, will it?" And thus the soldier carried on a conversation which might be called a double one, since it was an odd mixture, partially

addressed to the surgeon and partially to the wound in his ankle.

"What do you mean by saying that you don't know whether he was stuck with a knife or not?" queried the surgeon.

"See here; just fix this thing a little, will you, doctor? It don't hurt so thunderin' much, but it spouts blood like a stuck whale." And the soldier ground his clinched teeth more in anger than in pain.

The surgeon ordered Colonel Blakely to be conveyed to the hospital, and then turned his attention to the soldier. Mr. Wontus felt inclined to follow Blakely, but a desire to hear the soldier's story held him back.

"You see," said the soldier, supporting his wounded leg with his hands, "a lot of us fellers were separated from the regiment, and when Colonel Blakely come along and asked us if we'd follow him, why, we just went right in. Some of the New York and Pennsylvaney boys who had just come out told us we'd better stay out, but the colonel went on and we followed. We'd just got in the middle of that swamp over there, when, thunder and lightnin', how they did pour it into us! Of course we broke, and when I looked around I noticed Colonel Blakely, who was on foot, had stuck in the swamp,—got mired; and just at the same time I saw one of the ugly devils jump over the fence, with a big knife in his hand, and make for him. That's all I saw, for, pink! and down I goes myself with this feller. You don't think it will amount to much, do you, doctor?"

The surgeon said he did not think the wound dangerous, and then turning to Wontus, remarked: "I noticed that the officer's wound was rather a peculiar one, and I guess that there is no doubt but that it was done with a knife."

"Is the wound serious?" asked Wontus, anxiously.

"There is a large incision immediately in the rear and below the left arm, but as yet I am unable to tell its exact extent." As the surgeon spoke he moved off toward the hospital, and Wontus at once commenced rendering such assistance as was in his power to the men about him. At length the last one was spread upon a stretcher and carried away. Mr. Wontus and Tommy were alone.

"Tommy," remarked Mr. Wontus, after a time, "do I know anybody by the name of Blakely,—Colonel Blakely?"

"Maybe you do, sir."

"Yes, yes, I know! I must certainly know somebody by that name. I thought so the moment I heard it."

"Met 'em somewheres?" remarked Thomson, suggestively.

"For the life of me I can't tell," remarked Wontus; "and yet it must be so." And he looked upon the ground and commenced scratching his head as is customary on such occasions.

"Tommy," he remarked, after a long pause, "come, we must go!" And he started toward the river as he spoke. "Just run over a few of the names of the people that I know, Thomas; perhaps I may recollect."

"Gascon Nidd?" commenced Thomas.

"No, no! some of the names of people that I am not familiar with."

"Wilkins?"

"No, no! but go on." Mr. Wontus spoke as if in desperation.

"Me?"

"No."

"Diddler?"

"No."

"None of them?"

"No." And Thomas Thomson now commenced to scratch his head.

"Go on!" commanded Mr. Wontus.

"Major Flick?"

"That's it! that's it!" almost shouted Wontus. "I've got it! Oh, yes, Flick. Now I see; Mrs. Flick,—you recollect, Tommy, the sick woman in Washington. Yes, this is the man. I thought I heard the name somewhere, now I know all about it. He's the gentleman that they tarred and feathered in Alabama; the very man. I wonder what she'd say now if she was here. She'd pity him, I know she would. She loved him once; she said she did. I wonder if he loves her?" As he spoke these words a shadow came over his face, but it was gone in a moment, and he continued talking thus to himself until he found Nidd and Wilkins eating oysters, which the latter had fished from the plentiful supply at hand on the shoal-banks of the river.

Neither Nidd nor Wilkins appeared to be at all disturbed by Mr. Wontus's graphic account of the fight, and it was only the feast of bivalves that was spread before him that prevented him from becoming angry, and consequently disagreeable.

Eating does much toward assuaging the angry passions, and on this occasion Mr. Wontus had scarcely partaken, when his tongue was let loose again, and he related to the private ear of Mr. Nidd all about the wounded officer and his knowledge of him. Nidd listened patiently, and at the conclusion remarked that it was a singular coincidence, and then went on with his eating, as before.

During the remainder of the day there was peace and quietness in the camp, and Mr. Wontus wandered about among the hospital tents, and sympathized with the wounded. He was grieved that he could do no more. He had sought for Colonel Blakely among the wounded, but he was not there. He had been removed to one of the transports lying out in the river.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AND IT RAINED—THE ARMY MOVES ONWARD, AND THE CORPS WITNESSES A DISTRESSING SIGHT.

Mr. Wontus's assiduous attention to the sick and wounded now brought him to the attention of the surgeons, and through these kind-hearted gentlemen (to whom he had related the unfortunate loss of the stores which he had intended for the sick and wounded) the quartette was provided with quarters in one of the unused hospital tents. During the evening he was introduced to quite a number of officers, and in listening to one of Mr. Wilkins's narratives, in which Wilkins was the central figure, and in which he drew a line of similitude to many of the exploits performed by different parties on the present occasion, Mr. Wontus forgot the miseries of the day and fell asleep.

Again it becomes necessary to recur to Mr. Nidd's private journal.

[EXTRACT.]

Thursday, May 8.—Weather delightful. All expected to be made sick by sleeping on the ground. Everybody feels splendid. Gunboats went up the Pamunkey (handsome name)

River this morning on reconnoitering expedition; went along. Fired into things generally. Saw some of the infernal Inflatus this evening; cut them.

Friday, May 9.—Preparations for march. Everything slow, easy, and pleasant.

Evening.—Eltham Farm; marched here this afternoon. Only a step from the other camp. Splendid place. Took a good look at the army to-day. Very large crowd of men. Each regiment has a band of music. Each company has a wagon. Each regiment has from ten to thirteen wagons. Each company has its tents. Each tent has its complement of men,—six men to a tent. Each tent resembles its neighbor so much that I find it troublesome to tell where I live—if I can call this living—if I turn around twice.

Saturday, May 10.—Everything quiet to-day. Commander was here this afternoon. Looked splendid, and boys cheered him.

Sunday, May 11.—Another move to-day.

Evening.—Jones's Farm. Have left the river, and will take the inland road in future.

Monday, May 12.—The whole army collecting here. Grand sight; but nothing of importance, that I can see, going on.

Tuesday, May 13.—Cumberland. Beautiful place. Marched here this morning.

Evening.—Great excitement. Attack on wagon train. No tents. Very warm. Sleep in plowed field. Wontus with the surgeons. Wilkins missing. Good thing.

P. S.—Wilkins is here. Has killed a hundred men, according to his account!

And it rained. There is probably no situation in life which can be compared, in the remotest sense, to a day of rain in an army without shelter. It is at once painfully distressing, disgusting, horrible, and disheartening. Such, in fact, is my faith in the influence of a slow, steady rain, that I feel that any army which presses an attack under the auspices of Jupiter Pluvius must of a necessity be worsted, if the fight is anywhere near equal. And this is the way Mr. Wontus felt. What sleep he had taken the night before was on the bare ground, without so much as a handkerchief to cover and protect him from the blinding dust which always accompanied the

army in dry weather. This being the case, he was glad when he saw the clouds gathering; but when the rain came he complained about it, and turned a deaf ear to the bitter language of Nidd and the others.

With the close of the day, and after everybody was soaking wet, the surgeons secured a tent, and into this solitary shelter the gentlemen crowded. I verily believe that Wontus himself would have been inclined to fight had there been a disposition shown by anybody to deny him entrance. In course of time a fire was kindled in front of the tent, and I must draw a veil over the picture presented by the party as they sat there drying their clothes.

At the hour of three A.M. the army was again in motion. The flood-gates of heaven seemed to have opened, and with the dawn of day the rain poured down as if the clerk of the weather thought that all mankind had been transformed into turtles, and that water, and plenty of it, was necessary to their existence. Weary, hungry, and wet, the soldiers plodded along, the Wontus Corps of Observation among them. Scarcely a word was said by anybody. Even the horses appeared disgusted, and hung their heads lower and lower, as the march progressed. The infantry had made a way for themselves through the fields, while the artillery and wagons kept the road. It was nearly noon when the advance columns came out from the woods upon the beautiful plains of the White House. Luxuriant grass, heavy and sparkling with the drops of rain, was waving in the wind. Farther on was a neat, white cottage, with its cluster of "quarters," and beyond that were the waters of the Pamunkey.

Mr. Wontus saw the waving grass, the cottage, and the river; but they moved him not. His spirits had been crushed by the rain, and he was ready to yield up the ghost without a murmur. The savagery which had beamed upon Nidd's face disappeared with the sight of civilization, and Wilkins became actually merry. Tommy was accustomed to follow the moods of his master, and the party trudged on. At last the camping-ground was reached. It was on the high banks of the river, and near the cosy, comfortable cottage. The regiments were assigned their ground; the arms were stacked; and then came the waiting for the baggage.

And it rained.

Fires were built, only to be squelched out by the rain, and the men stood about with their ponchos pulled closely around them. They were waiting for food and shelter. The surgeons and our friends had waited with the others, and their patience was nearly exhausted, when Mr. Nidd proposed and urged that they take shelter in one of the outhouses which surrounded the cottage. Why not? Once proposed, it needed but little argument to move the gentlemen, and they proceeded at once to put the proposition into execution. Mr. Nidd had inquired as to who the owner of the house was, and on ascertaining that he was one of the most bitter and unrelenting foes of the government, he insisted that the cottage itself was the only place suitable for a corps of observation. He took the lead himself, and would have unceremoniously entered the yard, but a guard was there who warned him back. Mr. Nidd could scarcely believe his eyes.

Had it not been for our friend's experience with the same sort of a man at Fortress Monroe, it is probable that there would at least have been some questions asked; but with this experience before him Mr. Nidd's countenance fell, and he turned away. Next the slave quarters were visited; a guard was there. The same at the barn, the corn-crib, the wagon-house, the cooper-shop, the pig-sty; everywhere that shelter might be had from the pelting storm a blue-coated guard, with bayonet fixed and visage grim, made to his suffering comrades the same reply, "Ye cannot enter here!" and then mutteringly cursed the inexorable law that bid him say it.

With the surgeons the condition of affairs was understood; with Wontus it was incomprehensible; with Nidd it was damnable, and when out of the hearing of the guard he denounced it in unmeasured terms.

"What!" said he, "is this the way the men who have been reared by the hands of the government, and who are now seeking her heart's blood, are treated? The man is an ass—a knave—who enforces it, and were he here I'd tell him so. *Justitia virtutum regina*, as the lawyers say. Let us be just to ourselves before we are generous. The man who is not is a——"

"Hush!" commanded one of the surgeons. "We can't allow you to go on in that way, sir."

"You can't?" cried Nidd, bitterly. "Better by far if you

would not allow some other things to go on in the way they are going."

Further remark by Mr. Nidd was cut short by Wontus clinging to his arm, and begging him in a whisper to be quiet. Nidd consented most unwillingly, and the party returned to the river-bank and sought the shelter of the trees.

And it rained.

The night was coming on apace, and long lines of troops kept pouring on to the plain, but as yet not a baggage-wagon made its appearance. They were stuck fast in the mud.

The gunboats and a schooner lay at anchor in the river, and as night threw her gloomy mantle over the plain an undisguised feeling of despondency pervaded all circles.

Not being familiar with the uses and consequent abuses of many medicines, I am unable to state or even give an opinion concerning the effectiveness of whisky, except as a disturbing element, when taken in large and frequent doses. But it was the practice in the army to administer doses of the medicine to the men, and therefore I suppose it is both proper and highly efficacious.

With an ease that was really astonishing, and with a copiousness that was certainly wonderful, the rain poured down. The troops had assembled in their company streets, and stood huddled together like sheep. But few fires would burn, and there was little or no fuel. There were the fences, but who dared touch a rail? Not a man! and as the bleak evening wind came rushing up the river, the men stood and shivered. Still, no wagons. "What can we do?" the officers asked of each other. Noon had passed dinnerless, and night had come, and yet nothing to eat. Nidd had secured a gigantic rooster somewhere, nobody knew where or how, and he stood there, defiantly holding it in full view of all.

As time passed, results of different descriptions were brought about in a way which, to the eyes of Mr. Wontus, were very mysterious. He had been looking down the river-banks, and noticed that a number of men were engaged at something on the deck of the schooner; but it was not until he saw men with canteens, pots, and kettles passing and repassing him, that he understood that a ration of whisky was being issued; first, because it was "regular," and second, because there was nothing else. Eagerly the troops waited for the ration. Two

camp-kettlefuls were to be issued to each company, but it required no great amount of strategy for a company to receive a duplicated quantity.

It was not necessary for a man to see or be informed that the ration had been issued for him to know that it had been, for it soon spoke for itself. Twenty thousand men thronged about their quartermasters, and of that number, perhaps, nine-tenths quaffed the "quarrelsome broth." Of these, some did it because it had been the custom of their lives, others because they had an appetite for it, and the remainder out of pure desperation, fostered by a desire to be oblivious to passing ills.

And it rained.

It was now dark,—black, pitchy dark,—and the few camp-fires that were burning seemed but to make the night look darker and more dismal. For fully an hour the tide of soldiers had been carrying the liquor by the spot where our friends were standing. A few jokes and suppressed laughter were as yet the only effects of the stimulant; but ere long the jokes became broader, the laughter louder, and everything much enlivened.

Where all had been quiet before, the song was now heard, and in many of the streets bearded, savage-looking fellows played the part of the fairer sex, and whirled each other over the tangled grass in the mazes of the waltz. As they passed and repassed between Mr. Wontus and the fires, the dull blaze cast a glare over their excited faces, and made the imagination conjure them into some terrible ogres who had come to make merry at the misery which surrounded them. The songs soon gave place to cat-calls, and these were followed by yells of the most unearthly character, which rang from one end of the vast plain to the other. Jollity and good humor prevailed on all sides, and the officers, glad to rest from the torment of men whose wants could not be gratified, sought the shelter of the trees and sipped their rations in silence.

It was a pleasant change from the gloom of an hour before, but the end was not yet, and as Mr. Wontus and his friends walked through the camp other sounds than those of joy greeted their ears. The heated words of men quarreling could be distinctly heard, and ere the gentlemen had fairly returned to their old position on the river-bank, a sullen roar of angry voices came up from one of the more distant camps,

and in a moment the cry of "Fight!" "fight!" went rolling over the waters of the river, and echoed again and again among hills and woods beyond. It was a common cry, and the officers had heard it many times before, but now it seemed to have a startling significance. Belts were tightened, and nervous hands grasped their swords. But whither were they to turn, or who would respect their authority now? Crowds of swaggering, swearing men pushed by, all eager for the combat. Now a yell for some peculiar institution of their native city would rend the air, and then again would come the sullen roar of the fighting mob. Now the sharp crack of muskets was heard; something must be done. Regiments fresh from the road came pouring in, and halted in amazement as they heard the sounds. Horsemen dashed here and there, and amid the noise and excitement Mr. Wontus declared that it was pandemonium, and asked to be led to a place of safety; but ere his request could be acceded to, a brigade of fresh men came marching among the rioters, and the noise and confusion soon after died away. All night long the wet and weary troops were marching into the camp to find repose and refreshment in the pools of water which surrounded them. But such is the soldier's life in the field, and it came only to be forgotten.

As Wontus doubled himself up on the wet grass at a late hour, he mentally vowed that if it was his good fortune to live through the night the army would lose at least one man in the morning, and that man would be himself. Wilkins was among the missing, but Nidd was there, and if the weather was bad the conveyancer was correspondingly disagreeable, and he clung to his chicken as though his very life depended upon it.

But little sleeping was done by anybody that night, and the gentlemen were astir at the peep of day. The rain had ceased, but the atmosphere was hazy and warm.

"I leave here to-day!" remarked Mr. Wontus, as he looked at the clouds and then at his own wet extremities.

"You do?" cried Nidd, grasping his fowl more tightly, and speaking with more than his usual excitement.

"I do!" replied Wontus, decidedly. And then he spread his plans before Nidd and Tommy. He would leave after a mouthful of breakfast, and would return to Washington.

"How do you propose to go?" asked one of the surgeons, as Mr. Wontus unfolded his plans over a cup of coffee.

"Take a boat," cried Nidd.

The gentlemen shook hands warmly, and although Mr. Wilkins was still absent, bid the surgeons good-by, and made their way to the landing. Vessels were now there in abundance, but neither love nor money could induce them to carry a passenger, and after many vain attempts the departure was postponed for another day.

Finely situated for the encampment of an army, the view presented at the White House was one of unqualified beauty. Receding from the river, and high above it, a level plain, covered with luxuriant grass, stretched back nearly a mile, and terminated in a gentle acclivity. Fine springs existed on every side, and the neighboring fields afforded abundant rich pasturage for the cattle. The infantry and artillery lay on the plain, while the cavalry occupied the hill-side.

By noon on the day following the season of rain, the troops were in the places assigned to them, and when the bright sun came out the scene was so enchanting that Mr. Wontus would have been loth to leave had the opportunity presented. During the day he exerted his most persuasive talent to induce Mr. Nidd to either kill the fowl, which he guarded with so much jealous care, or to deposit it in some safe place. But Nidd would listen to neither proposition.

"Here comes the two old cocks," cried a facetious soldier, as the gentlemen were wandering about the grounds.

"There!" cried Mr. Wontus, "do you hear that?"

"Sir," returned Nidd, elevating his head and speaking with great dignity, "I do hear it; but I have heard other things in my life which I paid no attention to. So I treat this."

"But you hold us up to the ridicule of the whole army," returned Mr. Wontus.

"Sir, I paid one dollar in good silver money for this bird, and I intend keeping it until it suits me to do something else with it."

Here the conversation dropped, and the arrival of Benjamin Wilkins, who had a lengthy tale of experiences to tell, changed the subject, and the corps of observation accepted the situation and set about making itself comfortable.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CORPS BECOMES EQUESTRIAN—WONTUS EXERCISES HIS FAMILY STEED AND BECOMES EXERCISED HIMSELF—THE EMBALMING PROCESS, BY B. WILKINS, ETC.

I HAVE seen men in that peculiar condition called glorious, and I therefore consider it perfectly proper for me to say that Mr. Benjamin Wilkins was in a glorious condition during the time that the party remained at the White House. The army concentrated at this point, and Benjamin found many congenial companions among its ranks. As a member of a corps of observation, which connection Mr. Wilkins made free use of when speaking of himself,—his importance and knowledge, always great, were now simply tremendous.

By the advice of some of his acquaintances, Mr. Wontus had secured a new outfit for the party, and Nidd and himself were each the owner of what he called nice family horses; that is, they were warranted to be gentle in harness, and perfectly sound. (All army horses answer this description.) A desire to economize had provided Messrs. Thomson and Wilkins with a pair of those docile, obedient, and generous little animals called by Mr. Thomson me-ules, and the corps became equestrian. Neither Mr. Wontus, Mr. Nidd, or Thomas Thomson had ever bestrode an animal in their lives, and either one of them knew quite as much about flying as they did about riding a saddle-horse. With Wilkins the case was different. As "a man of the world," he had had unlimited experience in riding, and was master of the art. He would teach the others.

The weather was now clear and beautiful; and the pleasurable excitement attending the concentration of the army, together with the positive knowledge that the enemy had taken himself to his intrenchments about Richmond, over twenty miles away, gave to our friends such a comfortable feeling, that Wontus declared his intention to remain awhile longer, and soon after forgot that he had ever entertained the idea of leaving.

Yesterday the fields, hills, and vales were reveling in the quiet beauty of nature. No sound save the warble of the bob-o'-link broke the peace and stillness of the air. No living thing save the wild animals of the forest pressed the sod where to-day a hundred thousand men, with all the paraphernalia of war, make the welkin ring with their shouts. The miseries of the march were forgotten in the season of rest. The past was a fast-fading panorama, in which the bright features were treasured in the memory, while the dark ones were passed over and buried in oblivion. Yesterday but a solitary home broke the view; to-day a city swarming with people, with regular streets and rows of canvas houses, fills the plain. The sutler, with his mixed mass of stores, has come, and from early morn until "taps" at night his mart is crowded with anxious buyers, who seek for goods without questioning the price. And all this shall fade and pass away as quickly as it came, and "leave not a wrack behind."

"How strange! How wonderful it is!" soliloquized Mr. Wontus, as he and Mr. Nidd stood and gazed down upon the lively scene before them.

"There goes the cavalry," remarked Nidd, suddenly, without appearing to notice the sentimental humor of his friend. "Now, where do you suppose they are going?"

Mr. Wontus, of course, could not answer the question, and as he watched the long, moving line, as it crossed the railroad and moved off around the hill, his eyes grew bright, and ere Mr. Nidd was aware of it the short legs of his friend were carrying the body which they belonged to down the hill at a wonderful rate of speed. As he neared the camp he called lustily for Wilkins, and when that gentleman made his appearance, commanded him to saddle his horse without delay.

"Gear him up!" cried our hero; "the cavalry are going out on an expedition, and I shall accompany them."

The bystanders looked on in amazement as Mr. Wontus stuffed his pantaloons into the red legs of his new boots, and buttoned up his coat preparatory to mounting. The horse was "geared up" after a time, but not by Mr. Wilkins, for the moment that gentleman noticed the restless condition of the "family animal," he found important business elsewhere, and handed the quadruped over to the hands of the doctor's servant.

"Whew! look out, dar!" shouted the servant, as with head and tail erect the horse manifested his dislike for the process of "gearing up." "Look out, dar, ye 'fernal bis-screant!" repeated the negro; "de gen'man dun gone an' took de starch out ye d'rectly, I'll bet ye." And following this speech, Sam, the doctor's boy, rolled his luminous eyes in their sockets, and cast peculiar glances at Mr. Wontus.

By the time Mr. Wontus was ready to mount, Nidd, Wilkins, Thomson, and a score of acquaintances had assembled to witness the performance. It now occurred to Wontus that perhaps he had been a little hasty in making up his mind, and when he remembered that he had never undertaken such a feat before, he expressed doubts as to his ability. The gentlemen present averred that it was the simplest thing in the world, and all that was needed was confidence. To prove that there was really no particular talent required, Sam, the doctor's boy, was directed to mount the horse, and he did it. It was very simple.

"A man should never ride without spurs," remarked one of the company, as Mr. Wontus nervously took hold of the bridle.

"Certainly not," chimed the bystanders. And then it was explained how headstrong some horses were, and how very necessary it was that the rider should wear spurs, that he might be better able to manage his steed. Mr. Nidd echoed the remark, and ere Mr. Wontus had a very distinct idea as to what was really going on, a pair of gigantic Mexican spurs, with rowels as large as his hand, and bells which tinkled with every step, were strapped to his heels, and it was announced that he was now all right.

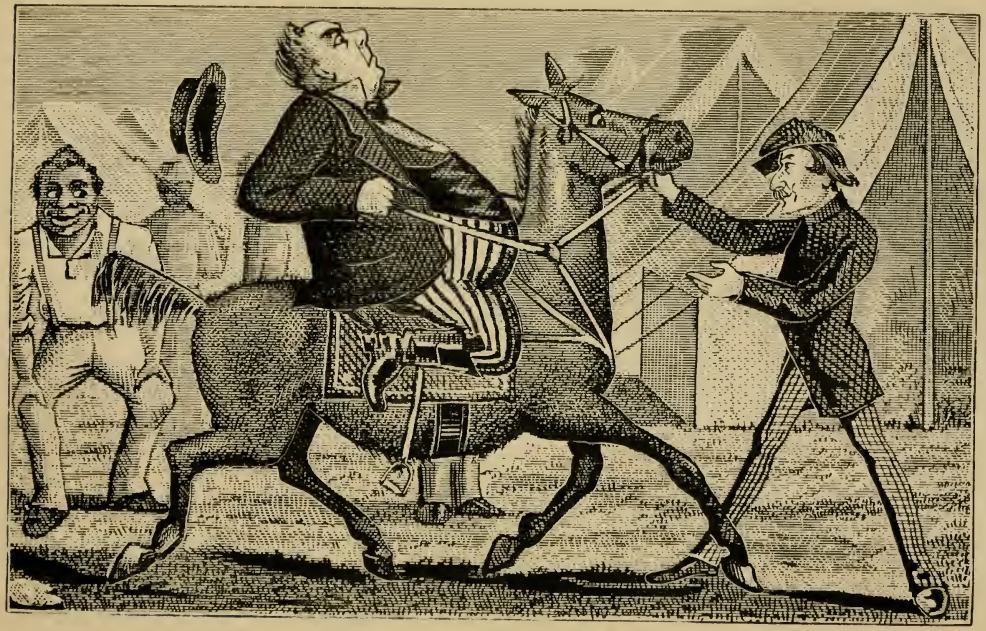
Sam had mounted without the slightest trouble, but Mr. Wontus would have given considerable if he had never seen the horse. But it was too late to back out now, and again he seized the bridle. As he stepped to the side of his charger, the bells tinkled; the horse pricked up his ears and shied off. He had heard the sounds before. Three different times did our hero attempt to mount, with precisely the same result each time. Assistance had been offered him at first but he had declined it; now he would accept the services of anybody. A dozen hands held the horse, and as many more assisted him to mount. In the excitement he had forgotten all about the

cavalry expedition, which by this time had disappeared over the hill, and he sat on his horse—as we have seen little boys do it—with indecision marked in every feature.

The wags which this big army contained could be counted by thousands, and the gratification of a whim with a vein of humor in it was the rule, never the exception. As we already know, Mr. Wontus was of an innocent, confiding nature, and therefore it was unfortunate that he should have fallen into the present company. He had the love and respect of all who knew him, but even that feeling could not be allowed to step in and prevent the gratification of "a little fun." Not a bit of it.

As Wontus sat on his horse, with a rein in each hand, he was a picture, which, having been once seen, could not easily be forgotten. His army life had taken nothing from his rotund figure, and his lately purchased coat displayed it to the best possible advantage. Two or three times he had endeavored to place his feet in the stirrups, but at each attempt the horse would shy and endanger his equilibrium; so he sat there with his short legs drawn up like the letter Z, the flaming red tops of his boots glistening in the sun.

"I'll lead him a little," remarked Mr. Wilkins. And, suiting the remark by his action, he took hold of the bridle and walked the animal around the tents. On his return Mr. Wontus's face wore a smile, and although the big drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead, yet he seemed to have gained confidence by his little experiences, and tried it once around alone. He was getting more courage every moment, and he looked at Nidd after a manner which seemed to say, "Don't you wish you were me?" It was now that the assembled company commended him most highly, and persuaded him to try a longer and a faster ride. Most men are susceptible to flattery, and Olympus Wontus was no exception. Of course he would. and he started. His gait was slow at first, because his horse appeared to admire it, but with numerous "Get up, Dick!" and various other remarks, which I find it impossible to write. he finally persuaded a trot, which had no sooner commenced than he wished that he had been less ambitious. Onward went the horse, and up and down, like a vertical shuttle, went the rider. He would have reined up if he could, but he could not, for it required both hands to hold fast to the saddle, to keep him in



WONTUS EXERCISES HIS FAMILY HORSE.

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an upright position. Between the ups and downs he endeavored to speak soothingly to the animal, and thus cease his torment, but the horse was either deaf or perverse, for he paid no attention to his rider, but jogged along in such a manner as certainly cannot be appreciated by anybody who has not tried it. "Whoa!" cried Mr. Wontus. And now he commenced to seek for his stirrups. What an unfortunate seek it was! No sooner had the horse felt the motion of Mr. Wontus's legs about his sides than he quickened his pace, and the ups and downs were more terrible than ever before. "Stop! stop!" cried our modern Gilpin. And he pressed his legs closer to the saddle. But the horse did not stop; on the contrary, the more his rider shouted, and the closer he pressed his spurred feet to the flanks, the faster he went, until at length he broke into a lively gallop.

Poor riders were plentiful in the earlier stages of the war; therefore a greater part of Mr. Wontus's ride had only been witnessed by those who saw him start. But now the scene was growing interesting, and the faster the horse traveled and the more his rider shouted the larger became the circle of spectators, until he was the cynosure of all observers, and as he galloped through the camps yells from ten thousand throats added a new impetus to the speed of the charger. Away sped horse and rider; the latter the picture of despair, the former frenzied with excitement. Caps and knapsacks flew into the air as each camp gave forth its spectators, and cries of "Catch him!" "Stop him!" "Here he comes!" "There he goes!" rang in Mr. Wontus's ears like a summons to instant death. Away over the hill and down the other side dashed the horse, followed by a motley throng of soldiers. A Virginia fence barred farther progress in that direction. The rider closed his eyes, and throwing himself forward, grasped his steed's neck. This movement naturally elevated Mr. Wontus's legs, and consequently relieved the horse's flanks of the pressure of the spurs, and in a moment the maddened animal, only too glad to be allowed the privilege, halted, and his rider fell to the ground in a state of complete exhaustion.

When Thomas Thomson and the other gentlemen arrived on the spot, Mr. Wontus had so far recovered as to be able to stand. He had sheltered himself in one of the many angles of the fence, and was gazing with subdued rage at his "family

steed," who was at that moment quietly refreshing himself on the tender grass before him, as if nothing out of the usual routine of affairs had occurred. What our hero's thoughts were I am unable to say, for, contrary to custom, he gave vent to no word that would indicate them. Somebody suggested that he should remount and return to camp. Wontus looked at the speaker savagely, but said nothing. Motioning to Tommy, he took his arm, and without casting so much as a glance at the source of his woe, he hobbled silently over the hill, and in due time was among his friends. Once here, and the discovery made that no serious damage had been sustained, such sympathy as he received would have melted Mr. Nidd, and that is saying a great deal. Following the sympathy came encomiums of praise, and following the praise came full and complete explanations as to how the accident occurred. Sam had not "geared the horse up" in a proper manner, and on Sam's broad shoulders the blame was rested.

"After all," said Mr. Wontus, as he sat talking over the matter in the evening, "I think I did very well."

"Well?" echoed the doctor; "you not only did well, you did grandly. I know of no man in the brigade who could have done half so well." And thus our hero was impressed with the idea that what had been a premeditated practical joke was purely the result of an accident, and although he felt bruised and sore, he retired to his tent feeling that the courage he had exhibited was well worth the price he had paid. He had been the first of the party to ride on horseback, and now that it was over he was very proud of his exploit.

Mr. Nidd's fowl had been a source of some trouble to him, for by day as well as by night he found it necessary to keep a vigilant guard over his captive. It was not often he left his quarters, but when he did he carried his chicken with him. "You remember," said he one day, when Mr. Wontus expostulated with him, "when at Yorktown we were minus so much as would fill a tooth? Well, sir, I do not propose to be caught in that scrape again, and as live stock will not spoil by keeping, I propose to save this bird alive until the day arrives that we shall need it."

As a class, soldiers are peculiar. They are all improvident. The wants of the present satisfied, they have no care for the future. In this respect officers and men are alike, as the pay-

rolls of the former will testify. Mr. Wontus appears to have become inoculated with something of a like peculiarity, and in the pleasure of the present he forgot that there was a future, and would have persuaded the conveyancer to be of the same mind as himself, if he could. But he couldn't, and the fowl lived for a few days more.

Our friends were surprisingly healthy, and gained so much strength and confidence with the passage of time, that when the vanguard of the army reached Cool Harbor, Mr. Wontus longed to see some of the operations, and resolved to make the journey. Each of the gentlemen had made himself familiar enough with his beast to be able to sit upon his back without fear, and when the hour came for parting Mr. Nidd was found to have made his fowl fast to the cantle of the saddle, much to the undisguised grief of Sam, the doctor's boy, and many others. But at length the party started, with directions to follow the well-beaten path then being traveled by the trains of supplies.

As they passed along, Mr. Wontus was struck with the number of embalming establishments which had sprung up like mushrooms along the roadside, and whose flaming signs met the eye on every hand, but it was reserved for Mr. Wilkins to signalize the occasion by a burst of knowledge.

"What's that air?" queried Thomas Thomson of Mr. Wilkins, as they rode side by side in the rear of Wontus and Nidd.

"That?" asked Wilkins, pointing to an embalming establishment, whose sign set forth the virtues of this particular establishment over all others, and ended with a poetic effusion which placed the beauties of the dead being sent back to those who were alive, looking as if they were not dead at all; "that's a 'balmin' place." And Mr. Wilkins proceeded to spell out the words which he saw on the sign.

"'Balmin'! What's 'balmin'?" asked Mr. Thomson, suddenly drawing up his foot to keep it out of the way of his mule, who desired to scratch his ear with his rear foot.

"And you don't know what 'balmin' is?" laughed Mr. Wilkins, who had succeeded in mastering the sign. He laughed insinuatingly.

"No, nor I don't believe you do, neither," quoth Thomson, with spirit.

"Ha, ha, ha!" continued Wilkins, "I thought you were smarter than that."

"Well, now, how smart are you?" queried Thomson, sneeringly. Mr. Wilkins paid no attention to the remark, but continued his laughter.

"You're a thunderin' fool!" cried Thomson, "and I don't believe you know anything howsmuch about it." Having said this, the gentleman commenced a vigorous thumping on the sides of his animal, and would probably have left his companion behind had it not been that just at the moment that the mule had evidently made up his mind to perform some astonishing feats, the nature of which we can only guess at, Mr. Wilkins ceased laughing and said:

"Mister Thomson, without any p, supposin' you was dead."

"Can't s'pose," replied Mr. Thomson, angrily, tugging at his bridle. "Never was dead, and can't s'pose nothin' about it, no more nor you nor any other man kin."

"Whew!" whistled our experienced friend, at Mr. Thomson's unusual display of temper." "Yes, but jist supposin' you were dead."

"Well, s'posin' I was."

"Well, if you was to die, I'd insist on havin' you 'balmed. Don't you see, I think more of you than you was a-thinkin' I did."

Mr. Thomson looked more pleased, and drew nearer his companion.

"Well," continued Wilkins, "now we'll just supposin' you are dead, and the colonel's concluded to send your carcass to New York, to that gal. Well, the next thing to be done would be to turn your carcass inside out. (Thomson looked amazed.) You see, that'd keep you clean and neat. Well, after that was all done, then you'd have to be biled for a day or two, and then hung up in the sun to dry off and get hard agin. Well, as soon as you was hardened enough, then you'd be taken into that place, or one like it,—it all depends on the price, you know,—and them fellers would stuff you with a kind of ingredients which they have got and you'd be preserved just as good as new; there ain't nothin' in the world could destroy you, particularly if you got 'em to insure you."

"You don't say!" cried Thomson, with startling emphasis.

"A fact, as sure as shootin'," replied Mr. Wilkins; and then,

as if fearful of further questioning, he whipped up his animal, and in a moment had joined Wontus and Nidd. For the rest of the day Thomas Thomson was in a condition of painful doubt, and more than once was on the point of renewing the conversation on the subject, but each time had his intentions frustrated by Mr. Wilkins calling his attention to the many interesting things which presented themselves as they journeyed along.

When evening came the corps of observation found itself in strange company; that is to say, of all the men who swarmed about there was not one face that any of the party save Mr. Wilkins, of course, could recollect as ever having seen before.

"Let well enough alone" is a maxim which, if the corps had heeded, would have eased them of the discomfiture and vexation which attended their efforts at securing quarters after arriving at Gaines's Mill. The army had but recently moved into its new position, and as yet everything was unsettled. But a charitably disposed quartermaster's sergeant was found at last, and in consideration of the payment of a small sum the party was permitted to consider one of his tents as their temporary home. The boxes and barrels which filled the tent could not be, or at least were not, moved, and while they came in very handy as sitting-room furniture, Mr. Nidd complained of them as inconvenient, and somewhat uneven as beds. But they were pleased for all that, and Nidd consumed the greater part of his time in feeding and watching his fowl.

It was during the first few days of the corps' new situation that an accident occurred, which, although comparatively common, was nevertheless somewhat disastrous in its conclusion. It is well known that Mr. Nidd was not the most liberal man in the world, and as this trait of character is generally conceded to carry with it more or less selfishness, it is fair to presume that he was a little selfish. I certainly have no desire to deal harshly with Nidd, but when I say that he and the sergeant agreed to eat the treasured fowl some time when they were entirely alone, I feel that I have done nothing more than is proper, for that was precisely the agreement they had made. Nidd, to his credit be it said, felt some compunctions of conscience, somewhat ashamed of the matter; and he only consented after it was settled that the feast should take place at some spot where the participants would not be likely to be

disturbed by any of the members of the corps. The preliminaries being all attended to, the sergeant and Mr. Nidd proceeded some distance from their camp, and the fowl was prepared for the pot, which Nidd's companion had procured for the occasion.

The day selected was one on which Mr. Wontus and the others had made up their minds to pay a visit to the right wing of the army, and Nidd was sure that they would be absent all day, hence when the pot commenced to boil, he sniffed the aroma which arose from its contents, and smacked his lips in anticipation of the enjoyment. He would have *one* square meal now, if he never got another.

It was noon when Mr. Nidd seated himself by the side of his new friend, at a little distance from the fire, and commenced a story, which would have continued much longer than it did had the sergeant not interrupted by declaring that the fowl must certainly be done. No second reminder was necessary for Nidd to immediately proceed to the pot, feel the fowl with his knife, and then declare that it needed still more cooking. How many times this operation was repeated it is unnecessary to say; let it suffice that the times were very numerous, and that it was not until his patience was entirely exhausted that he at last permitted the fowl to be lifted from the pot and laid on a large flat stone which had been washed and warmed to receive it.

That the gentlemen were hungry there can be no question, and while his companion proceeded to develop the contents of his haversack, Mr. Nidd proceeded to endeavor to dissect the fowl. It was an endeavor only, for the fowl not only refused to permit the knife to be inserted into its joints, but successfully defied every other effort made to dismember it. The sergeant tried it, and Nidd tried it again and again, and it was only after he had exhausted every known effort that he gave it up in disgust.

"Well," said Nidd, while the sergeant was still working on the carcass, "I paid for that chicken, and I'm glad of it. I consider it a relic of the past, for having purchased it on the very ground where Washington was married, I feel perfectly confident that, had it the power of speech, it could detail every event of that interesting occasion. I'm sure it was there on that day." As he ceased speaking he cast a look of mingled regret and anger at what was to have been a "square" meal,

and slowly proceeded to assist his companion in endeavoring to dispose of the homely fare spread before him. But the end was not yet.

It is no exaggeration to say that the fowl had been boiling, or was in the pot, at least since noon, and now it was growing dark. Nidd was provoked, and as he lay upon the grass debating in his mind how he would account for the absence of the fowl the sergeant bid him good-evening, and departed, leaving the conveyancer to follow at his leisure. He was in a bad humor. He thought of the many steps he had taken on account of that fowl, and of the abuse he had suffered, that in the end he might enjoy the fruits of his courage and labor. But now to have it dashed from his very lips, when anticipation had heightened his appetite, was more than he could calmly submit to. So he lay there and thought until the sun went down, and darkness was coming on apace.

Mr. Nidd was not at all near-sighted, and yet he has it recorded somewhere in the pages before this one, that the tents of the army all looked so much alike that even in daylight he occasionally experienced trouble in finding his quarters; and this being true, his trouble at night can be readily imagined. Retreat had sounded in the cavalry camp, still he lingered ruminating, and it was full dusk when he gathered his long legs and prepared to move homeward. What happened to him on his homeward walk deserves a short chapter of its own.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN WHICH GASCON NIDD HAS A STARTLING ADVENTURE.

THE Signal branch of the service had not come to that condition of perfection which characterized it a year or two after the peninsular campaign; but still it was found to be of immense advantage, and was freely used by the different commanders. Flags did the work in the day-time, but at night the flaming flambeau was brought into requisition, and at times long lines of lurid torches could be seen waving and

dancing in the air like jack-o'-lanterns, and extending from the outworks or picket line far back into the gloom, where a division commander sat in his tent and anxiously listened to the reports which came to him by the fiery, silent messengers.

Nidd walked slowly in the direction in which he believed his quarters lay, quite busy with his reflections, and the darkness had come ere he commenced to wonder if he was going in the right direction. There were men and tents all around him; but as each man and each tent seemed to look so much like those which he wished to find, and yet were not, he became more and more confused as he passed along. Dark, heavy clouds obscured the stars, and when Mr. Nidd failed to find the quarters he was looking for he declared that the night was the darkest he had ever seen in his life.

Like many other people, Gascon Nidd seemed to have an idea that because a man was a soldier, that he would certainly be acquainted with, or at least have some knowledge of, every other soldier in the army; hence he believed all the men he had asked as to where Captain Saltems's quarters were were very ignorant because they could not tell him. He had fully made up his mind to this, because he had failed to get any information; and now resolved to go it, as he said, on his own hook. Now it seems that one of the lines of signal-lights, before referred to, was occasionally operated somewhere near his quarters, so when he saw a line of these lights waving before him he quickened his steps and walked toward the nearest one. As the light would wave and dance about for a time and then suddenly disappear, Mr. Nidd found it absolutely necessary for him to keep his eyes firmly fixed upon the spot where he had last see it, and in that way he trudged along through swamp and brier, only to find when he reached the desired place that the light had in some unaccountable way moved to another spot still farther away than ever. But he persevered, and at last, bruised and sore, reached a station only to find, when there, that the men here were as ignorant as to Saltems's quarters as those he had left behind. This was most vexatious, and he was thoroughly disgusted. He permitted this feeling to go so far as to commence to think that the best thing he could do would be to remain where he was all night; but he dismissed the thought with a curse, and suddenly resolved to make one more effort. This effort

had an unfortunate termination, and it occurred in this wise.

In his peregrinations Nidd had floundered into a deep and bushy ravine, and while there had become thoroughly bewildered. Now he would be ankle-deep in the mud, and when he struggled out he would find himself firmly held by the bramble, which stuck into his clothes and flesh in a most frightful way. Thus far he had kept up his courage, but now so many difficulties beset him that he commenced to weaken, and he sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree and was in despair. It was while he was sitting here wondering what was to become of him, that he saw a faint light glimmering through the tangled bushes. It was like the beacon-light to the wrecked mariner, and the moment he satisfied himself that it was not his imagination which created it, he rose and made his way as fast as possible toward it. He had lost sight of the beacon, but was pushing on through the brush in a direction which he was sure was right, when suddenly his steps were terminated and his blood almost frozen by the cry:

"*Halt!* Who goes there?"

It was pitchy dark, and while the voice seemed quite near him, Mr. Nidd could not distinguish the slightest semblance to a human being. But he halted for all that, and held his hand up before his eyes to convince himself that it was really as dark as he thought it was, and that he was not going blind.

"Who goes there?" cried the voice.

"A friend," said Nidd, most humbly. He had seen enough of army life to know what was necessary, and he was now doing his very best.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!"

"I haven't got it," replied Mr. Nidd, still more humbly than before.

"Stand fast!" commanded the voice, and then Nidd heard the sharp quick click of the lock of a rifle. It was only a moment from the time that Nidd heard the clicking occasioned by the man cocking his piece and the time of his speaking again, but that moment was pregnant with a multitude of thoughts of the most distressing character. He was sure that the sentinel was directly in front of him, and but a few paces off; he was also equally sure that the man had his piece cocked, and that the

muzzle was directly covering his body. Now he knew that it required very little pressure on the trigger to fire the rifle, and he felt sure that if the unseen man who stood before him was just one-tenth as nervous as he was, that the piece which was covering his body would surely go off, and that that would be the end of all his earthly calculations and prospects. He was sure that this result must inevitably follow if relief, in some shape, was not afforded immediately, and he felt very much happier when he heard the sentinel cry out:

"Corporal of the guard, post number four, double quick!"

The fear of the sentinel shooting him by accident was still lingering in Mr. Nidd's mind, and with it, but now more prominently than the other, was the thought that perhaps in his travels he had wandered through some break in the lines of his friends, and was now about to be taken in hand by his foes. He felt like speaking to the sentinel, but the fear that by so doing he might disturb the man's nerves and thereby have himself shot, deterred him, and he stood there as immovable and as silent as a statue, while the big drops of perspiration came out upon his face and rolled down his cheeks unheeded.

It was not long ere the sound of the corporal's feet could be heard crushing the dry twigs; and when that individual broke through the bushes with a lantern in his hand, Nidd was delighted to notice that he wore the blue of the government. The sentinel soon explained why he had called, and after the light of the lantern had been thrown full upon the person of Mr. Nidd, that gentleman was directed to advance. It needed no second invitation, and in due time the hero of this chapter was taken in charge and escorted to the headquarters of the guard. Once here, he made a full explanation as to how he had come into his present situation, and then desired that he should be escorted to his own quarters, which he now learned with great surprise were but a few hundred feet away. But this request could not be granted, for aside from the rather suspicious circumstances under which he had been made a prisoner, his looks were decidedly against him. But Nidd could not rest. The fear which had guided his actions but a little while since was gone, and he demanded to see the general whose headquarters' guard he had been captured by. He pressed this point so frequently and so determinedly that the

officer of the guard finally conveyed him to the quarters of his commanding officer, and he was ushered into the tent.

The officer was about retiring, and Mr. Nidd found the greatest difficulty in satisfying him as to his loyalty and business; but when he mentioned Mr. Wontus's name, the general commenced to think better of him, and after Nidd had made many promises, which he forgot the moment he was safe in his own quarters, a soldier escorted him home, and he crept into his place among the barrels and boxes, and laid plans for keeping his adventure from the knowledge of his friends. For a long while he was successful in this, but the fact that it finds a place here is evidence that it leaked out at last.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BATTLE OF FAIR OAKS—THE CORPS UNDER FIRE—AN OLD CHARACTER IN A NEW PLACE—THE DESERTER—THE PURSUIT—THE CAPTURE AND DEATH.

Day after day rolled by, yet the army did not enter the foe's capital. When he arose each morning, Mr. Wontus asked: "When will the army move?" and when he retired at night the same answer was returned: "To-morrow!"

The railroad stations of portions of Virginia were much like the miles: they were rather uncertain. To be on a railroad train and find the cars stopping, and hear the conductor call out "Mulligan's Corner," is generally the signal for all the passengers to quit doing everything else and gaze out of the windows. Usually there is something to be seen at these stations, but many of the stations on the line between West Point and the city of Richmond could not boast of anything more attractive than an almost impenetrable wood, with a sandy cart-road leading to some place, so far away as to be entirely beyond the line of vision. Such a place, with a few clear fields interspersed, was Fair Oaks Station in the latter part of May, 1862.

The morning of the 31st of May found Messrs. Nidd, Won-

tus, Wilkins, and Thomson riding in the order in which they are named into the yard of a pleasant-looking brick house, which stood on an eminence near to and on the north side of the railroad. It was this house that gave the place the name of Savage's Station.

Some days before, the troops of the left wing of the army had advanced from the banks of the Chickahominy, and now fifteen regiments, from nearly half as many States, lay stretched along the railroad to within six miles of the rebel capital. They had been nearer, but the orders of the general-in-chief had brought them back, and when Mr. Wontus came among them the advance lines were in the vicinity of Fair Oaks.

Mr. Wontus and his party had been so assiduous in their attention to the sick, and so clever to all who came in contact with them, that they were now well known and welcome in any part of the army. Wontus himself was most active, and his money was always at the command of those who needed it; many a sick cot and mess-table was rendered happy by his generosity.

There was nothing prepossessing in the looks, manners, or style of the gentleman who greeted Mr. Wontus as he dismounted, yet there was something indescribable in his bluff, off-hand speech well calculated to make the casual observer single him out as a man worthy of attention.

"Ah, come to see us, eh?" The voice was sharp, accompanied by a sharp nasal twang. "Glad to see you; but you'd better remount and go back." As the general spoke, he put forth his hand, and while he grasped Mr. Wontus's warmly, his little gray eyes seemed to express more than his words.

The conversation which ensued was something like this:

"We thought——" said Mr. Wontus.

"You better return," interrupted the general.

"That we would come over here——"

"Better return!"

"Because we heard that——"

"Better return!"

"It was very probable that——"

"Everything is probable."

"There would be an advance——"

"You'd be better off at home!"

"Of this wing——"

"Can't move!"

"Which would penetrate——"

"The capital of a certain nameless region!"

"Richmond."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"Take my advice, and return to the other side of that infernal swamp immediately."

"Must we return?" Mr. Wontus emphasized the verb, and looked at the general wonderingly.

"Would be glad to have you, but——"

"But what?"

"There is danger here. *We* are here to be shot at; it's our duty, our business; but there is no occasion for you to expose yourself."

"But where is the danger?" asked Mr. Wontus. And as he did so he noticed that there was a strange quietness pervading the camps, that but few stragglers could be seen, and that the horses were standing saddled and ready for their riders.

"Do you hear those shots off there to the left?"

"Pickets firing," remarked Mr. Wontus, turning his eyes towards the spot indicated.

"Picket firing? Hark at that; pickets don't often fire shots like that. And as he spoke the roar of a field-piece was heard, quickly followed by the shrill screaming of a shell.

Leaving Mr. Wontus to his thoughts, the general gathered his staff about him, and in a few moments a dozen young officers were flying over the fields in as many different directions, and the companies were forming in the streets of the camp near by.

Still, there was nothing to be seen, and Wontus and his friends made themselves as comfortable as they could, and waited.

It was now noon, and dark, heavy clouds hung like a funeral pall over the grounds soon to be dyed by the crimson blood from a thousand brave, bright hearts. Certainly no more fitting ground could have been chosen for a battle-field. Undulating, and dotted here and there with clear fields and thick woods and tangled swamps. Mr. Wontus looked with eager expectations at the preparations which were going on about him.

Nidd and Wilkins, who had overheard the conversation between the general and their senior, vehemently urged the acceptance of his advice, but Wontus was deaf alike to their counsel and entreaties, and announced his determination to remain. "For," said he, "this was my original intention. I cannot fight, but I can assist the sick and wounded, and I shall remain and carry out my original idea; the idea which induced me to leave New York and come here." As the gentleman spoke, his eyes blazed, and his lips quivered with the excitement which filled his bosom. The impending battle had lent wings to his imagination, and, as had become customary, he already pictured himself inspecting the curiosities of the rebel capital.

But the sounds were drawing nearer, and the soldiers took their arms and were marched into the field beyond, and the fight commenced. The troops of the gallant Casey were in advance. Indications of the projected attack had made them watchful, and when the enemy struck they found a foeman worthy of their steel, and the bloody work commenced. Onward swept the columns of the enemy, only to be driven back and held in check until reinforced. First the left, then the centre, and then the right met death without a quiver. But this was but the initiatory ceremony, and again the solid columns of the foe moved like an avalanche, and swept down upon the devoted left. The flank was turned, the lines broke, and the troops, fighting as individuals, slowly fell back. Help now, or the day is lost. Hark! rising above the din of musketry and the roar of batteries, a cheer breaks upon the ear, and the men of Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts have come to the assistance of their comrades, and the battle went on afresh. Onward pressed the foe, not in regiments, not in brigades, but in swarms. They had driven our men from the rifle-pits, and the heaps of dead and dying tell the price of the victory. Casey's position was no longer tenable; his guns were hot, his ammunition scarce, and his brave men exhausted, and then the short but feared retreat commenced. Couch's line was reached, but how fearful was the loss! Men passed from life and activity to silence and death like snow-flakes in the sun of spring, while the roar of advancing cannons and the exultant yells of the enemy conveyed the idea that the day was nearly won.

And it rained!

In an instant the light of day was almost shut out from the earth, and the deep peals and clashing of Heaven's mighty artillery swelled upon the air, and sank man's grandest, most wondrous achievements into insignificance. Gloomier become the day, yet the battle raged unceasingly, while the clouds opened and poured down their deluge of water. Backward, still backward, the struggling lines of blue were pressed; disputing each foot of ground as though it were a treasure, until the sheltering banks of the railroad were reached, and then the foe was compelled to fly to the shelter of the woods, there to prepare for the onslaught which was intended to crush and annihilate the left wing of the army of the Potomac.

But the prayer which had been ascending all day was answered, and the men from Long Island, and Maine, and New Hampshire came marching over the tottering bridges which spanned the maddened waters of the Chickahominy. To the rescue, or all is lost. The momentary lull was but the calm which precedes the storm, and belts were tightened and muskets clutched firmer, for a change is being made among the divisions of the enemy, and long lines of men in gray come swarming along the road, and disappear in the woods. But the lines of men in blue are no longer inactive; close by, and with a clear, smooth, undulating field between him and the enemy, the batteries of Heintzelman are manœuvring under the cover of the thick woods. Twelve pieces have already taken their places, and more are following. Their movements are masked from the sight of the enemy by the dense foliage of the trees, and no word is spoken. Determination is stamped upon the grimy faces of the artillerists, and while the thunder of the fight is sounding away to the right and left, all is silent here. Heintzelman knows the love which his foe has for the cannon of the government; he has seen him on other fields, and at other times, do daring acts that he might embrace the object of his affection, and now he is about to profit by it. A section of six-pounders are advanced from the line in the woods, and take up position in the clear, open field beyond. They stand in plain view of the enemy, and pour their shot and shell into his ranks as though he were but a harmless target.

The ruse succeeded; the exultant foe debouched from the woods, and advanced across the plain, with drums beating and

flags flying. Still the artilleryman with his two lone pieces played upon them. Onward they came, line after line, in one solid mass, stretching from the railroad on our right to the Williamsburg road on the left. They came up like a division on review.

"Double shot with canister!" rang from the line of guns in the wood, and the command was quickly executed, and again all was silent and motionless.

"Charge!" cried the rebel leader, and with a triumphant yell, the men let their guns fall into their hands, and bounded forward. Onward they came, and now the limbers and caissons of the two pieces in the field are reversed and hastily retire, leaving the cannoneers to seek shelter where best they may. This movement is the signal for another yell, and the guns are captured. For a moment the lines seem to falter as though their duty had been performed, and then again they advance.

"Fire!" The command rings from the line of guns in the woods, and a score of cannons hurl their hundreds of missiles of death and destruction in the solid mass of advancing men. Wide, gaping avenues are mowed by the resistless canister at point-blank range, and the dead and dying lay where they fell like grass in the swath of the mower. The lines quiver and break, but the officers rally their followers, and in a moment are ready for renewed action. Still the guns belch forth their hail of iron and lead. Again the reformed lines are broken, and resist the efforts of their officer to reform them, and confusion pervades the ranks. Men are seen to throw themselves on the ground and seek shelter behind the prostrate forms of their dead comrades. Frenzied with excitement, the officers endeavor to cheer their men, but without avail. A third and fourth attempt is made to renew the charge, but the murderous fire from the guns has had its influence, and the men will no longer face the wall of death. They break again; they fly and seek the shelter of the woods from whence they came, and the setting sun now breaks out from among the clouds and tells us that the day is ours.

During the night which followed, long lines of men from the north bank of the Chickahominy came upon the field, and the dawn of day found the gallant Sumner ready for the fray. Fighting Dick Richardson was the first to receive the compliments of the enemy, and right well he accepted them. The

fields, still strewn with the dead and wounded of the day before, were fought over and over again, until at last the enemy withdrew to the former grounds of Casey, and assumed a defensive position. Now was the time for the decisive blow, but it fell not, and ere the midnight hour had come the enemy had retreated and taken up a new position.

During the fighting of the first day, and far into the hours of the night, Mr. Wontus, accompanied by Nidd and Thomson, had endeavored to fulfill their self-imposed duties, and many a wounded, dying soldier had his lips moistened and his terrible thirst slaked by the hands of the corps of observation. In the misery which surrounded him, Wontus appeared to forget the dangers and fatigues of the battle, and he labored as he had never labored before. Nor was Mr. Nidd or Thomas Thomson backward in coming forward, but each did his best. Early in the action, Wilkins had started to search for a spring of water, and Wontus was charitable enough to believe that the reason he did not return was because he was lost or had been taken prisoner. Neither accident had occurred; Mr. Wilkins and his mule were both safe, and on their way to the haunts of the sutlers in the rear.

Mr. Wontus and his friends had spent the night in the pits with Richardson, and the dawn of day found them astir. With the light came the rebel legions, still intent on the annihilation of the left wing. The —th Pennsylvania, the —th New York, and the —th Massachusetts were drawn up to receive their earliest compliments, and acting under orders, our hero threw himself on the ground behind the friendly heaps of dirt, and awaited developments. As he lay there he saw, or thought he saw, the face of a man he had seen before, in the person of a young officer wearing the insignia of a colonel, who dashed hither and thither with a bravery that made Mr. Wontus shudder. Our hero, usually forgetful, found that the excitement and stirring scenes about him caused his mind to wander in so many directions that it was not until the officer dismounted in front of him that he could concentrate his faculties, and then he recognized the face of Colonel Blakely.

"Good morning, colonel," cried Richardson, extending his hand and speaking in a manner which characterized him; "we are likely to have some more of the lively times of yesterday;

but, old fellow, you've been in the saddle all night; you must be weary; come, take something. Staff duty's not so light as it might be, eh?"

Colonel Blakely returned the greeting of the general with warmth, and then the conversation turned upon the affairs of the past, and Mr. Wontus learned that the wound which the colonel had received at Brick House had been but a slight affair, and that he was now acting as a staff officer of the commanding general. He had been engaged all night in carrying instructions and posting the different commands. He had fulfilled his duties, and now wanted to see some of the fighting.

It was while this conversation between General Richardson and Colonel Blakely was going on that a man from one of the regiments drawn up in line near by came to our hero and asked for a chew of tobacco. He was referred to Thomas Thomson, and while he was engaged in cutting a slice from that gentleman's plug, both Wontus and Colonel Blakely looked at him as one often does at the men who pass him in the street, and who resemble, in some strange, unaccountable way, the characters of a dream. The man was dressed in the uniform of a private, and was tall and commanding in his presence. His face was surrounded with heavy black whiskers, and the peculiarity of his walk gave him a highly military air.

As the soldier deposited the tobacco in his mouth. he cast a quick, anxious glance toward the lines of the enemy, and then took his place in his company. As he passed Colonel Blakely that officer looked at him as though he would read his very thoughts, and then fell into a thoughtful mood, from which he was soon awakened by the voice of the general calling his attention to the lines of gray then fringing the woods alone the Williamsburg road.

"It cannot be," muttered the colonel, as he cast his eyes in the direction indicated; "and yet the walk and general bearing of the man is the same."

"I have seen that individual before," soliloquized Mr. Wontus, as he watched the man take his place in the ranks. He was about to call Mr. Nidd's attention to the matter, when the action along the front became general, and he deferred it until a more quiet opportunity should be presented.

Hours passed, each second of which were recorded by the

dying breath of brave men, and the battle was at its height. The regiment from whose ranks the man who had attracted the attention of our hero and the youthful colonel came, had been held in reserve. They had stood manfully, where bullets flew the thickest, awaiting the word of command. Mr. Wontus had watched the man with anxiety, and despite his best efforts to the contrary, his eyes would wander to that portion of the line where the strange face—strange because it was impressed on his memory and yet could not be fixed—had taken its place. There had been a lull of the din for a few moments, and Wontus was just about turning his attention to another direction, when the man whose face he felt so much interest in, stepped quickly forward, and jumping over the rifle-pits, loosened his belts, and with a wild shout threw his gun aside, and sprang forward across the field in the direction of the enemy.

"A spy!" "A deserter!" rang out from a score of voices, and a hundred muskets were leveled at the flying man. But none dared shoot. With a cat-like spring, a lithe, sinewy form had come up as it were from the ground, and with mighty strides was following in the footsteps of the deserter.

"Don't shoot, fellers!" cried a voice which Mr. Thomson at once recognized as his old friend Birkill. "It's Blakely,—Colonel Blakely; an' a thousand to one he wins. The rebs are retreatin', an' it's a long chase." A cheer greeted this remark, and the dangers of the battle were lost in the excitement of the chase. Nearly a mile now intervened between the lines of Casey and those of the enemy, and the country was clear and level. Onward flew the deserter, and at his heels was his pursuer. Men volunteered to go to his assistance, but they were denied the privilege. Now he gains; again he loses; he falls; and the deserter will escape; a shade of sorrow passes over the faces of the men. Again he has him almost within his grasp, and now a curl of smoke is seen to ascend from the hand of the pursuer, and the deserter falters, swings his arms in the air—falls.

Wontus and Nidd, who had been witnesses to the whole affair, could no longer restrain themselves, and with a shout from Nidd, such as was never heard before and will probably never be heard again, the two gentlemen left their shelter and made their way to the spot as fast as the short legs and short

wind of Mr. Wontus would permit. It was probably fortunate that Gorman at this moment struck the rebel left and drew his attention in that direction, otherwise the little knot of men who had assembled in mid-field, about the wounded man, might have come in for a disagreeable share of attention. As it was, they were unmolested.

"Is he badly hurt?" asked Wontus, between breaths.

"I hope not," remarked Colonel Blakely. "I saw that if I did not bring him to a stand-still quickly, that it was likely he would reach the enemy's lines ere I could come up with him; so, after repeated warnings, which I am sure he must have heard, I drew my pistol and fired. I am sorry——"

"Not a bit, sir! not a bit!" interrupted Nidd. "There is no occasion for it. The man was not only attempting to desert from his command, but was endeavoring to play the part of a spy, and carry information to the enemy. There is no occasion to be sorry for what you have done, sir; not a bit. A few more men like you, sir, would——"

"We had better carry him to the rear," interrupted the colonel, who evidently had no desire to listen to his own praise.

The wounded man lay on the ground, his eyes closed and his face wearing the appearance of death. As Mr. Wontus stooped by his side and parted his lips, that he might pour a little water into his mouth, the crimson tide from his heart came gushing forth, and a convulsive shudder ran through his frame.

"Thank Heaven, he is not dead!" exclaimed the colonel, who had been an anxious witness to the scene. "Now let us get him to the rear, where a surgeon can be found. It is dangerous here."

A blanket was procured, and the prostrate form of the deserter lifted into it, and in that manner conveyed to the hospital, established in the shade of the pine-trees which had masked the cannon on the day before. It was during the walk to the hospital that Mr. Wontus entered into conversation with Colonel Blakely, and expressed the idea that by some singular accident, for which he could not then account, the man had impressed him when he first came to him and asked him for tobacco, and he found it impossible to dismiss him from his thoughts.

"I feel sure," remarked the colonel, "that I know the man." And as he spoke a shade of sorrow passed over his expressive face; but in a moment he continued: "Yes, I feel sure that I know him, and yet the circumstances of to-day and those under which we last met are so widely different from what I should reasonably expect, that I am half inclined to believe that, after all, I must be mistaken."

The colonel ceased speaking, and fell into a contemplative mood.

Wontus was completely mystified by the language of his companion, but he refrained from intruding upon him by questioning, and they followed along in silence.

The fighting had now fairly ceased, each combatant feeling satisfied to remain on his own ground without disturbing his antagonist. The muskets of the troops were stacked, and the men at "rest" in line of battle. Each looked forward to a renewal of the fight.

"It is comfortable," remarked Mr. Nidd, as the blanket containing the deserter was deposited on the moss-covered ground, "to have this infernal shooting at an end. It is wearisome, to say nothing of the danger."

As Nidd spoke, a surgeon made his appearance, and the gentlemen assembled around to hear his report of the case. Among these Mr. Nidd was foremost. The blanket was rolled down, and as the surgeon turned the man upon his back, Nidd gave vent to an exclamation of surprise, and then grasping Mr. Wontus's arm, led that gentleman aside, and whispered that he knew the man.

"You do?" asked Wontus, in surprise.

"I do!" answered Nidd, decisively.

"I thought *I* did, but I can't place him," returned Wontus.

"You can't?" And Mr. Nidd held his friend off at arms-length and looked into his face with the air of a man who doubts.

"Well, I think I know him; but you know my memory is not very good, and I've forgotten where I have seen him." Mr. Wontus spoke sorrowfully.

"Not know him?" cried Nidd again.

Mr. Wontus declared that he did not.

"Do you recollect the man that brought us the word of Wilkins's arrest in Philadelphia?"

"Yes."

"Do you recollect his peculiar style?"

"Yes."

"Don't you remember his name?"

"I do not," replied Wontus, reflecting.

"Wasn't it Flick,—Major Flick?"

Mr. Wontus stood back aghast. He was startled as though a stream of electricity had suddenly passed through his frame, and for a moment he was speechless.

"It cannot be!" he cried at length.

"It is!" replied Nidd.

"Let me see," cried our hero. And he pushed his way through the crowd, and for a moment stood looking into the now upturned face in silence. "Colonel," said he at length, addressing Blakely, "I know that man. I met him in Philadelphia. He was then a major on secret service, or at least represented himself as such, and I am surprised to see him here. His name is Flick!" Mr. Wontus looked about him as though he deserved credit for the developments he had made.

Colonel Blakely raised his eyes from the ground, but made no reply. A deeply solemn look overspread his face, and his thoughts seemed to be far away amid the scenes of Alabama. The lovely form of a bright and beautiful girl was once again by his side, and the rich blood of youth came unbidden to his cheek. It faded and was gone in a moment, and his eyes wandered to the form which lay stretched before him. Memory, quickened by a face that was branded on his heart by injustice and cruelty, now presented a different scene. He saw himself again the reviled visitor where he should have been the favored guest, and felt anew the pangs of grief caused by the cruelty of a love that once was his. Again the scenes of his undeserved disgrace came before him, and he clutched his hands and his brows knit with the recollections of his pain. And now *he* lies there, a wounded, dying man, and by the hands of the man he has so deeply, so cruelly, wronged. The author of his misery, the fountain from which sprang his first moments of bitterness, is here as helpless as a babe, and in his power. Suddenly he raised his head, and a brighter and more cheerful look has overspread his countenance, and as he stoops to question the surgeon as to the

nature of the wound, a deep sigh escaped his lips: "*Thy will be done!*"

"He is dying," remarked the surgeon; "the ball has passed entirely through his body, in the immediate neighborhood of the heart. He must bleed to death; no power on earth can save him."

Men who had faced death in all its hideous forms, and had heard the cry of the wounded and the dying, stood in silence, and a shudder ran through the group.

"Dying—will bleed to death?" The man opened his eyes, and his voice sounded hollow and thin. "Water!" he gasped, and the sympathetic hand of Mr. Wontus was stretched toward him in a moment. "Dying! me dying? oh, no, do not tell me that!" And again his eyes closed and all was silent.

"I must leave you," whispered the colonel to Mr. Wontus. "Do whatever lies in your power to make him comfortable, and when all is over be kind enough to report to me at headquarters."

"Stop!" The dying man opened his eyes again and threw them full upon the face of the officer. He would have risen, but weakness and the friendly hand of Mr. Wontus prevented him. "Do not go now," he moaned; "I know you,—I have done my worst, and my course is nearly run."

"Never mind, my man," said the colonel, soothingly. "Keep perfectly quiet, and you may see better days yet."

"Ha, ha!" The laugh was bitter and defiant. "You would pretend you did not know me; I know you *do* know me; I knew it this morning, but I little thought that you were the man that would bring me here." He ceased speaking for a moment and appeared to be in great pain. "God be merciful," he continued; "I have deserved much, but not this. (Blakely was moving off.) One moment," cried the suffering man, "I have much that I wish to tell you; I will soon pass away; it will relieve my soul to tell it. I have disgraced myself and all who belong to me; I married the girl you loved,—the girl who loved you, and from that day I have drank the dregs of bitterness. I sought it not; it sought me, and I was powerless to resist. I played the part of a spy in Washington, and tiring of that I returned South and joined my regiment, only to desert and play the part of a Yankee in

the cities of the West and North. (Nidd and Wontus exchanged glances.) I was without money, and I became a politician and a recruiting agent."

"Your wife?" interrupted the colonel.

"She is—I know not where," groaned the major. "I have not seen her since I left Washington."

Mr. Wontus was about to speak, but he was prevented by the major, who continued to relate how he had inveigled men into the army for the little money he made by it, and how he finally enlisted himself, with the determination to desert at the first opportunity, and convey what information he possessed to the authorities at Richmond. "I knew," he continued, after moistening his lips, "that I would be well known there, and that my action would be applauded." Again he ceased speaking, and the whisper went round the circle that he was passing away.

"No, no," gasped the dying man; "I am not dying. I am not fit to die. There are those that I would like to speak to; I have much to say. See, I am not dying." And as he spoke he raised himself up, only to fall back into Wontus's arms in a swoon. The effort had been too much for his exhausted strength, and the blood flowed in a stream from his mouth. His eyes were already sunken and glassy, and his groans were growing fainter. The scene was most affecting; and while none that were here now had been acquainted before, yet the knowledge that each possessed of the other, and the circumstances that had brought them together, seemed to bind them as a circle of friends.

The movement made by Wontus in passing the dying man into the hands of Nidd and the colonel started the spark of life anew. "Kate—mother," he muttered. "I curse myself." And he ceased to speak forever. Gently the body was laid upon the sod, and as the hands of Colonel Blakely covered the body with a blanket, a tear stole into Mr. Wontus's eyes, and his thoughts flew back to the invalid in Washington.

In a rifle-pit which skirted the railroad midway between Savage Station and Fair Oaks the body of the deceased was deposited; and as the warm, wet earth fell upon the unknown corpses which lined the bottom of the ditch, Mr. Wontus, who had been a silent spectator, stepped aside and fainted. The excitement had overtasked him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. NIDD TAKES A RIDE, AND HAS AN UNEXPECTED MEETING WITH HIS RIVAL.

Mr. Wontus was not alone in the idea that the moment was now at hand when the backbone of the rebellion would be broken by the entrance of the armies into Richmond, and that the moment which should witness the deed was near, very near. Certainly fifteen millions of people were with him in the belief, and were correspondingly happy. Of these, eighty thousand men, armed and equipped for war, were about him, each feeling assured that the decisive moment was at hand. Few men, if any, believe at the commencement of a battle that they individually have been chosen for the sacrifice. It is a welcome, but perhaps a selfish, thought, that the comrade on your right, and he on your left, will perhaps fall, but that you are to be saved; and yet so it is, and fortunately so, for much grief and pain are hidden in the thought.

The morning of the 13th of June, 1862, broke clear and beautiful; but it was not the only thing that broke that morning by any means. Since the commencement of the war "masked batteries" had been epidemic, but now a new disease broke suddenly forth, and without a note of warning played sad havoc not only with the material of the army but with the morals of the men composing it. The new disease was a "raid," but as yet it had affected but one side. "Everything quiet in every direction," wrote the commander to the President. While he wrote, fifteen hundred of the enemy were gobbling up prisoners and destroying stores and communications on the road between his headquarters and his base of supplies. The first intimation which most of the men of the army had of the event was three days after, on the arrival of the mails.

It was on this interesting occasion that Mr. Nidd found himself on a train of cars on his way to the White House in quest of provisions for the mess. It was full three days be-

fore he would venture to return, and when he did so he gave the following explanation to clear up the mystery of his absence. Said he: "We were going along over the road smoothly, and were just going to slacken up for water, when I heard an unearthly yell, accompanied by the clatter of small-arms. It was the first intimation we had of anything in the shape of an enemy being anywhere near us. Our train was made up of about ten or a dozen freight cars, and I was on the engine.

"'There's the rebels!' shouted the fireman, pointing to a field adjoining the railroad, and he threw himself at full length on the wood-pile in the back part of the tender. I was somewhat startled,—I may have been frightened for the moment,—and on looking around, I saw about three hundred ranged along the railroad, firing away at us as if it was a glorious piece of fun, and I guess it was, but I must acknowledge that I didn't enjoy it, at least not at that time. 'Down! down!' cried the engineer, and, with a courage and presence of mind which does him honor, the fellow pulled the throttle-valve out to its greatest limit, and then both of us took our places with the fireman on the bottom of the tender. Without waiting to say 'by your leave,' or even 'good-by,' the locomotive dashed over the rough track, and before we were well collected in our thoughts, the yells and shouts had died in the distance, and we went dashing into the White House as though the devil himself had sent us.

"The news of the raid had preceded us, and when we told our story the excitement and confusion among the army of sutlers and others was beyond description. Men seized horses wherever they could and prepared for flight without knowing which direction to go, and the quartermasters were busy moving their stores aboard the transports. Seeing all this, and not knowing exactly what was the matter, I reflected on my favorite maxim, that self-preservation is the first law of nature, and then concluded to take care of myself.

"You recollect the bank and underbrush by the side of the railroad near the spring," continued the speaker to Mr. Wontus. "Well, just as I noticed the place, somebody cried, 'Here they come!' and not being able to get on board any of the vessels I made for the bank, found a neat hole, well sheltered from view, which I undertook to crawl in. But I

MR. NIDD UNEXPECTEDLY DEVELOPS AN ENEMY.

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couldn't. There was something or somebody else there before me, but as there was no time for ceremony I took all the risks and crawled in as far as I could. I touched a foot; it shrunk up. I grasped further and touched a leg. (Mr. Wontus shuddered.) That foot and that leg belonged to somebody, that I knew; and as we were likely to be companions for a time, I thought I'd find out who it was.

"'Say,' said I, calmly, for fear I might make a mistake; but I received no answer.

"'Say,' I repeated; but still no answer. The thought struck me, perhaps the man is dead. I felt his leg; it was warm, and I think it trembled a little. I was now pretty well interested in a new direction. I waited a little while and then thought I would try something new.

"'They are right on top of us!' I cried, in a startling whisper. A groan, an unearthly groan, answered me, and I crowded up closer."

"Weren't you afraid?" asked Mr. Wontus.

"Yes," continued Nidd, "I must acknowledge that I felt rather strange, but I felt that the man in front of me was feeling worse than I was; I apprehended danger from the outside only. But to continue.

"'Isn't it pretty uncomfortable in here?' I asked. Another groan, deeper and more distressing than the others, was the only reply, and then everything was silent."

"I'd a' pulled him out," cried Mr. Wilkins, with spirit.

Mr. Nidd made no reply, but casting a withering glance at the speaker, continued: "I was in the hole, I guess, as much as ten minutes; but the heat was so intolerable and the air so close that I must either get out or die; so I backed out. There was plenty of excitement about still, but I saw nothing like fighting, and in the course of half an hour the scouts had returned, and everything had become more settled. The scare was pretty well over.

"Wait a moment!" commanded Mr. Nidd, as Wontus was about to say something. "I'll soon finish it now.

"'Halloo, there!' I shouted to the man in the hole. 'Come out! it's all right!' No answer. Perhaps the man will die, I thought; perhaps he might smother. So I crawled in a little way and took hold of his foot. 'Come out,' said I, 'it's all right. The enemy have gone.'

"'You want to come in here yourself,' said the voice.

"'Don't be a fool!' I continued. 'What would I want to come in for? I am outside, and as there is nobody here to harm me, I'll stay here.'

"'Are they all gone?' asked the voice, with more spirit than it had yet evinced.

"'All gone,' said I. I could hear the fellow working himself out, and I stood and watched for his appearance. First one leg came out, then the other, and then he stopped.

"'What's the matter?' I cried.

"'Are they really gone?' asked the fellow, peeping out from under his arm.

"'Certainly,' said I.

"'They're not!' said the fellow, and suddenly he commenced working back into the hole again. I thought perhaps the man was somewhat unduly frightened, and to get him out of that condition as soon as possible, I took hold of one of his feet, and before he knew exactly what was the matter, I dragged him out and took a glance at him. A man stood before me who looked as though he had done himself up in such a style as to be able to pass himself off for a lump of clay. He was mud from head to foot. His parents wouldn't have known him.

"'You appear to have been somewhat frightened,' said the fellow, as if he had done me a great favor by coming out of the hole.

"I could have butted my head against a tree," cried Nidd, rising from his seat as he spoke, his face assuming a livid hue. "The man I did not know; the voice I did: it belonged to Scribendi!"

On this announcement, Wontus laughed most heartily, and it was only after considerable trouble that Mr. Nidd could be induced to finish the story, which was to the effect that the moment Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson, otherwise Scribendi, brushed the dirt from his person, he proceeded directly to the headquarters of the officer in charge, and there related, in the most particular way imaginable, exactly how he had fought some half a dozen of the enemy until he was felled to the ground and left there for dead. He went further than this, and announced that no fears of an attack should be apprehended, as he had watched the enemy—exactly how many he could not tell—cross over the river a few miles distant. But

what warmed Mr. Nidd more than all the rest was the fact that such were the airs and graces of the man that none seemed capable of doubting his word, and he (Nidd) was too angry to be able to disabuse their minds of the deceit practiced upon them. He did undertake to relate the facts to one or two officers whom chance threw in his way, but they seemed to accept his story as the tale of a harmless lunatic, and passed it by with a wink and an incredulous smile.

"Why, he's not a patriot!" cried Wontus, at the finishing of the recital. "He has no business to be here. A man like that, besides being a coward, is a liar, and can't be trusted!"

Mr. Wontus's voice and manner were that of a man who deeply felt all he said, and ere anybody had an opportunity to disprove or verify his assertion he had gone off into such a quantity of abuse that a stranger coming in just at this time might imagine that he was the party who had been stung.

The moment an opportunity offered, Mr. Nidd opened his vocal batteries in his own peculiar style, and from the manner in which his eyes rolled and snapped I infer that the presence of Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson at that particular moment would have been the signal for a scene.

"You thought," cried Nidd, turning to Mr. Wontus, "that I disliked that man without cause; that I was prejudiced against him; that I fancied he stood in my way in a matter not necessary to mention here. Well, sir, you were mistaken. He is a counterfeit,—the spurious *fac-simile* of a gentleman, with all the details well attended to, but a bad signature,—a very bad signature, because it contains all the elements of an imitation in every line. Why, it looks as though it would insinuate itself into your confidence and respect by its very shape. But it's bad. I knew it the moment it discovered that we were not the men it took us for when it first presented itself to our attention in Philadelphia."

The vehemence and bitterness of Mr. Nidd had a soothing influence on Wontus, and assuring his friend that he would never be deceived again, the gentlemen proceeded to dispose of the trifles which had been secured at the White House, and in the stories which fell from the lips of genial souls who had been invited to participate the experiences of Mr. Nidd were forgotten, although that gentleman persisted in having the last words, and they were entirely too vehement to be polite.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN EXCELLENT CHAPTER, BECAUSE IT IS SHORT, AND ACCOUNTS FOR SOME THINGS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR BEFORE.

In conversation Gascon Nidd invariably spoke of the ladies in a way strangely at variance with his conduct when in their presence. He resembled in some degree those insects which flutter in and about the city street lamps in midsummer. Those that are inside seem to desire to be out, and those outside seem to be exerting all their powers to get in. In other words, before his wife's death, he was constantly preaching how much better off a bachelor was than a benedict; but as a widower his actions belied his words, and he seemed ready to assume the hymeneal noose whenever opportunity presented. Being of a cynical turn of thinking, however, he frequently selected in his mind the woman he would marry, and just as frequently determined to look further before he acted. And he was sly, very sly, in all his movements in this direction, for while Mr. Wontus was familiar with the fact that he (Nidd) had had a desire to cultivate an intimacy with Mrs. Squirm, yet he had no idea that that lady's image was still lingering in the mind of his friend. But the image was there, and why it lingered was because Mr. Nidd was in possession of certain intelligence, which may, in a manner, account for the hatred which he felt for Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson, otherwise Scribendi.

How Mr. Nidd ever developed the fact will probably never be known, but a fact it is, that he was in the possession of the knowledge that Mrs. Squirm, in whose house the corps had lodged while in Philadelphia, was the sole owner of a given number of thousands of dollars, which were invested in sundry back-alley houses, which houses rented at very high prices and were therefore valuable. Now, whether these back-alley houses had anything to do with Nidd's regard for the owner of the houses, I cannot say, but I am inclined to believe that they had. In fact, he had frequently made up his

mind that on his return from the war he would propose to these back-alley houses, and if accepted, would move to the Quaker City and spend the remainder of his life in ease and comfort. He knew that the idea was a selfish one, and he wondered what kind of a reception he would meet with at the hands of Mrs. Squirm in case he carried it out. This was a question which he frequently propounded to himself, and at length he settled himself down into the belief that if one man—just one man—was out of his way, there would be but little difficulty in his prosecuting his claim successfully. There, and only there, he believed, lay the trouble of a successful suit. He was vain enough to think that but few women could resist his overtures; but he felt that in the person of Mr. Higginson he had a man who was at least dangerous. "He's so plausible," he would say; "and has got so many ways about him which are false, but which look so nice on the surface, that there is scarcely one woman in every one thousand who wouldn't take him for the genuine article." And then he regretted that *he* was without those elements which would enable him to make people believe that he was what he was not; and he turned the matter over in his mind many times, and found but one solution to the difficulty. The man, Mr. Higginson, must be got rid of. But how was this to be done? Of course men disappeared in the army and were never heard of afterwards, and no questions were asked; but Nidd recoiled from the idea of doing the act himself, and he lived on with the hope that accident might do the work which he could not do himself.

CHAPTER XXX.

TELLS OF COLONEL BLAKELY'S LOVE—THE CHANGE OF BASE —AND WONTUS'S REINFORCEMENT OF THE ARMY.

For nearly a month after the battle of Fair Oaks, the army maintained its position in front of the rebel capital, and Mr. Wontus found himself and his party the welcome guests of Colonel Blakely.

Mr. Wontus had communicated all the information in his possession concerning Mrs. Flick to his friend, and after a great deal of trouble Mr. Wontus had written to the lady, informing her of the death of her husband. He was careful not to harrow her already wounded feelings by the recital of the circumstances attending her husband's death, and studiously avoided (by request) any mention of Colonel Blakely in connection with the affair.

Wilkins, whom we left on his way to the White House at the commencement of the battle of Fair Oaks, had returned. Nidd had become well acquainted through the army, and was valued by those who admired candor and plain speaking. The battles at Hanover Court-House and Mechanicsville had taken place; the different railroads leading toward Washington from Richmond had been "raided" and tapped, and everything was ready, if I may except the commanding general, for the attack on the rebel stronghold. McCall had come with his troops, and the people of the country were waiting with breathless anxiety for the end, which had been promised them day after day for weeks.

And it rained.

I cannot undertake to relate, or even epitomize, the conversations which took place between our friends and Colonel Blakely. Let it therefore suffice for me to say that they understood each other perfectly. At times Wontus was almost sorry that he had met Blakely, for while he would not acknowledge, even to himself, that he was in love with the widow, yet for all that he sometimes caught himself wondering whether, now that her husband was dead, the old love for Blakely would not come back again, and the two hearts join as one. In vain he endeavored to chase the thought away; but it would linger, and like a phantom present itself to him on the most unexpected occasions. Once he thought to rid himself of the affair by leaving the hospitable quarters of the colonel, for he had often heard that "out of sight was out of mind," and he would rid himself of his thoughts concerning the colonel by taking his departure.

He was running this idea through his head one afternoon as he sat alone in the shade of the pine-trees, when the object of his thoughts came upon him unnoticed, and asked him, in a jovial way, why he looked so sad. At most other times

Wontus would have avoided the question, but now, without knowing exactly why, he made a plain, unvarnished statement of his condition, and added that while he knew it was probably foolish and uncalled for, yet he could not help it, and now that it was out he felt better.

A smile of intelligence spread over the colonel's countenance as our hero commenced to speak, which after a time disappeared and gave place to a look of unfeigned sadness.

"I have heard her speak of you," continued Wontus, "in such terms, that I am led to believe that under the present circumstances a reconciliation might easily be effected." His manner was that of a man who was making a confession which he did not want to make and yet found it impossible to hold back.

"My friend," remarked the colonel, sitting down and taking Mr. Wontus's hand in his, "it has been a part of my life to avoid seeing this lady, or hearing anything from her; there has been too much grief, too much bitterness, attached to the recollection of her to induce me to seek to hear her name mentioned. For months she has been dead to me, and I have striven to forget her. How strange is life! The capture and death of Flick; the meeting with you and the words you have been able to communicate to me concerning those who have been dead to me so long, seem like the visions of a dream. And that I, the man who was so deeply, cruelly, wronged, should be the means of sending my rival to his grave! The thought is terrible, yet I simply did my duty. No, no, my friend; I have nothing to say for or against the woman I once so fondly loved. I have struggled to tear her image from my heart; it is gone, and the place is occupied by sadness; to me she is a neuter,—a plant that has been moved from my favorite spot, never to be replaced. I look forward to the time when a new love shall come, but I fear it is far distant; the plant which was strong in the sunlight of other days has been smothered, its bright colors deadened, and its very root torn up, and burned on the altar of sacrifices." As he spoke, his voice grew lower and sadder, and his whole form seemed to be filled with a grief which he was vainly endeavoring to conceal. For a time he sat in silence, his fingers nervously clutching the hand of Mr. Wontus, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, as if he saw among the moss and roots at his feet the pictures

of the past. Mr. Wontus silently contemplated his friend, his own troubles swallowed in the sympathy he felt for the man he had learned to love.

"My friend," continued the colonel, "my confidence in woman has been shaken. I have ever tried to be an honorable man myself, and have looked for the same honor in others. An impression once made is hard to eradicate. I find I have been mistaken, and now I must await the time when nature shall restore to my heart those purer feelings, which cruel wrongs have driven out."

"But I feel that a reconciliation could be easily effected," remarked Mr. Wontus, persuasively, as a man often does when he feels that he ought to say something.

"Never!" cried the officer, raising his head and speaking spiritedly; and then quickly relapsing into his former mood, he continued: "No, no; it can never be. She knows full well the cruel pain she has inflicted upon me; I could not drive their imprint from my memory. For us to live together, I feel, would be torture which could only end in death. I shall avoid her in the future as I have in the past. She shall have my best wishes for her prosperity, but no act of mine can ever contribute to it. This may be wrong, but it is my nature; I cannot help it. I forgive her freely; nothing more."

He ceased speaking, and a moment after, as though a sudden thought had occurred to him, he turned to his listener, and said:

"You will see her—perhaps you will see her again. If you do, do not mention my name to her in any connection whatever. Let it be as though you and I had never met. This I ask as a favor; you will grant it? I know you will."

He was now looking into Wontus's face with anxiety pictured on his countenance, and as our hero's glance met his, Wontus promised that his request should be respected. But he never, no never, expected to see her again. That our hero believed what he said, and intended to carry it out to the letter, there can be no doubt. His sympathy had carried him far beyond a clear understanding of his own feelings, and if the incidents in the pages which follow prove him to have been guilty of a falsehood on this particular occasion, it must be set down as an unintentional error, for which he is already par-

doned. But we shall see more of him and his friends ere we part from them forever, and this bids us hasten.

On the 25th of June Johnson resolved that an effort should be made to drive the invading army from before Richmond, and on the afternoon of the next day the attack commenced. That night the enemy rested at Mechanicsville, on the ground occupied by the "boys in blue" but a few hours before. Mr. Nidd's journal has so faithfully and briefly reported the events which followed, that I venture to reproduce a few leaves from his book:

[EXTRACT.]

Friday, June 27.—Things appear to be going wrong. Much firing on the right; Wontus swears we are to enter Richmond immediately. Have made inquiries in every direction; nobody knows more than I do. Much mystery. Feel sure that something is going wrong. *Note.*—"Never buy tripe on a Friday."

Saturday, June 28.—No sleep all night. Heavy firing continues, and draws nearer. Wagons and heavy guns passing through our camp all night. Going the wrong direction—away from the fighting. More mystery; not much of anything else.

Afternoon.—The news is out. We are going to attack the enemy in another direction. Don't believe it. Hear that there has been hard fighting at Ellison's Mill, near Mechanicsville. Jackson is there. (Very strange.) The two Hills are there; Magruder is there; Huger is there. If this be true, my judgment is that about all the rebel army is there, and we should now walk into Richmond.. Rain.

Sunday, June 29.—Excitement among troops; running and rushing about all night. Blakely tells us to be ready to move. Ready! General McClellan at Savage Station this morning wants more reinforcements. Orders for White House to be evacuated, and goods carried off or destroyed. Everything excited. Wontus guesses he will not go into Richmond for a few days. *I* guess we are in full retreat, but I can't guess when it will end. Destruction of property terrible.

Afternoon.—On the march; men, wagons, horses, and artillery line the road. Everybody understands what is going on now, and things look better since people understand what they have to do. Terrible fighting all around us. The men

stand up gallantly; they are modern Trojans. I ask myself, "Will they ever be forgotten for the sacrifices they are making?" Certainly! Curious world.

Monday, June 30.—No eat, no drink, no sleep,—nothing but fight, fight, fight. Wontus disgusted.

Afternoon.—James River. We can go no farther. Have lost men, horses, guns, stores, and about everything else but courage. Vessels here loaded with supplies. Our friends the gunboats with us once more. Sounds of fighting in every direction. Terrible.

Tuesday, July 1.—I have no heart to write. Wontus and the rest wander about like spooks. Fight, fight, fight; all the time, everywhere. Will there never be any rest for the poor soldiers? The most terrible fighting this afternoon and evening. We have mowed the enemy down with our cannon by thousands. They are shattered, broken, almost disorganized. I know it. I can tell by the talk of the prisoners. Now we can go into Richmond. Will we?

The day is ours. Malvern Hill is ours. The rebel army of Virginia is ours. Will we take it? Wontus says, "Now we *will* go into Richmond," and has gone to see the commanding general.

Wednesday, July 2.—Very little fighting this morning. Enemy retreating, and so are we. It makes space between us much faster if both retreat at the same time than if only one does.

When Mr. Wontus called on the commanding general at Harrison's Landing, it was with the firm belief that he could and would prove of some benefit. He did not consider himself competent to give his services in the shape of advice, as was customary, but he had made up his mind to return North without delay, and desired to offer himself as a bearer of dispatches to the President.

It is a very hard thing for a modest, unassuming man to have access to a general in an army of active operations, and so Mr. Wontus found it. Accident, however, favored him with an interview with Colonel Blakely, whom he had not seen for a week, and that officer escorted him through the cordon of guards, and he reached the office of the chief of staff. Here it was his duty to unburden his mind, and transact whatever other business he might have; but disap-

pointment and want of faith had made him stubborn, and he affirmed his intention to remain until such time as the commanding general would see him.

It was while he was waiting that he noticed a gentleman in whose face there was something which carried his mind back to Philadelphia. The man wore a military cap and blouse, but otherwise looked like a citizen. His moustache was nicely curled, and his face wore an air of importance. It was Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson.

As much to kill the time as through curiosity, Mr. Wontus made sundry inquiries concerning the gentleman, who appeared to have the faculty of figuring so extensively in Mr. Nidd's mind, and learned that he was the guest of nobody in particular and everybody in general.

"For myself," remarked Colonel Blakely, "I know very little about him. He's a sort of an enigma. We all know him, and yet do not know him. I presume he is a man of considerable wealth and standing. He talks of the great men of the nation as though he knew them all intimately, and his manner and style is that of a thorough gentleman, although I must confess that I have occasionally seen a vein of assurance about him which I do not admire."

Mr. Wontus now proceeded to relate his first meeting with the gentleman and Nidd's antipathy for him. He did not mention any of the particulars of the acquaintanceship, or the little incident between the gentleman and Nidd at the White House; in fact, he did not have the opportunity, for while he was speaking the subject of the conversation entered the tent, leaning on the arm and glibly talking with an officer.

Wontus was sitting on a camp-stool, near the centre of the tent, and his friend, Colonel Blakely, was standing by his side. At first Mr. Higginson did not appear to notice either the colonel or Wontus, although he had twice nearly touched them as he passed. He was engaged in relating a humorous story, and his laughter grated on our hero's ears with discordant sharpness.

"Ah, colonel," cried the gentleman, for the first time recognizing Blakely, "glad to see you; haven't seen you for an age. Terrible fighting since we last met. Safe and sound, eh?" As he spoke he grasped Blakely's hand and shook it warmly. "I've just been relating to the general how glo-

riously my friends Porter, Keys, Sykes, Meade, McCall, Butterfield, and the host of other good fellows, have acquitted themselves. Splendid movement, splendidly executed!"

"Mr. Wontus," said Blakely, stepping aside and introducing our hero; "an old acquaintance, I think."

Wontus rose to his feet, and as he did so the bright look faded from Mr. Higginson's face. In a moment he recovered himself, and bowing ceremoniously, asked the colonel to repeat the name; and then remarked that the gentleman certainly had the advantage of him.

Mr. Wontus was certain that Higginson recognized him, but his manner and overpowering impudence completely dumfounded him, and he stammered something he scarcely knew what, and felt like a culprit who has been caught in the act of committing a theft.

"Come, colonel," cried the gentleman, in the midst of Wontus's confusion, "come, take a turn about the camp, old fellow, it will do you good." As he spoke his lip curled and he cast a glance at our hero which seemed to say, "You are of very little importance, sir, very little." Wontus felt that he must certainly do something, and that immediately. As it was, Colonel Blakely must consider him wanting in truth. With this idea uppermost, he managed to grasp his friend's hand, and articulate a few words which, when put together, signified that there was a mistake.

"Oh, I *may* have met you, sir," continued Higginson, with a *sang-froid* that made Mr. Wontus tremble,—"I may have met you, sir; I meet thousands of people, yes, thousands, whose names and faces I do not recollect; I cannot recall them; the thing is impossible; I might as well try to remember the stars which throw their radiant glances at me from the blue sky above us, or the dew-drops which sparkle in the blades of grass in the morning sun. Impossible; eh, colonel?"

"You met me," cried Wontus, finding his tongue, and maddened by the nonchalant manners of the speaker,—"you met me in Philadelphia; at the hotel. You came, sir, believing me and my friends to be distinguished characters. When Mr. Nidd, a gentleman whom I think you do remember, informed you of our real characters, you left. We saw you again at our lodgings, and I happen to know you were impressed with the presence of one of our party. You were seen again at

the White House, where Mr. Nidd dragged you out of your hiding-place, at the time of the raid. I have always thought my friend was prejudiced against you; I now believe all he says of you, and what he says is not complimentary, by any means. You *do* know me, and I know you, but in the future I shall *not* know you. There, sir!"

Mr. Wontus could go no further, and he sat down and rested his chin on his hand, looking terribly angry.

During the delivery of the remarks of Mr. Wontus, Higginson, otherwise "Scribendi," looked with mingled rage and mortification at the speaker. At the conclusion he was about to speak, but he was interrupted by the entrance of the general, and turning upon his heel he tapped his forehead with his finger, and glancing at Wontus, as though he would indicate that our hero was insane, walked out of the tent, smiling.

At length the general would see Mr. Wontus, and, forewarned to be brief, our hero proceeded to inform the general that he was on very intimate terms with Mr. Lincoln, and as he intended proceeding North without delay, he would be delighted to be the bearer of any message the former might desire to send to the latter.

"Sir," said the general, mildly, "I have no message to send; but if you have influence enough to have some reinforcements sent to me I hope you will do so. With reinforcements this change of base would have been unnecessary; we should have been in Richmond to-day."

The general turned to his chief-of-staff, and Mr. Wontus left for his own quarters, deeply impressed with the interview. The affair with Mr. Higginson had faded from his mind.

"I have given up the idea of going into Richmond," said he to Mr. Nidd, philosophically, "and we will return home as soon as transportation can be secured."

It will be remembered, by those who have followed the steps of Wontus and his party from the commencement, that it was understood, in the agreement made with Mr. Wilkins, that that gentleman should enter the army whenever Mr. Wontus considered it necessary, and was to receive a certain stipulated sum for so doing. The particulars of this agreement had popped into Wontus's head the moment the general had mentioned his desire for reinforcements, and without

mentioning his plan to anybody our hero quietly determined that the general should have reinforcements, and the first instalment should be Benjamin Wilkins.

The next morning Mr. Wilkins was summoned, and with $500 in his pocket, Wontus, accompanied by Wilkins, set out for the headquarters of the army. I am inclined to believe that Mr. Wilkins was entirely ignorant of the part he was to play in the forthcoming interview. He knew that he was going to see the commander of the army, and that was all. "You must be very careful," remarked Wontus, as they passed along; "the discipline and etiquette of headquarters is very severe."

It is probable that Mr. Wontus would have proceeded to give Wilkins some advice concerning the line of conduct which he would expect from him, but his remarks were cut short by Wilkins proceeding to relate in his own peculiar fashion how he had lived and dined with the first generals and admirals of the world, not to mention the crowned heads and other notable people. In brief, ere he concluded, Mr. Wontus was inclined to believe that in simple justice he ought to change places with his man.

Fortune favored our friends, and they met the general and some other officers just outside of his tent. Wontus was full of delight, for now he felt that besides doing something for his country, by enlisting a man in her service, he was also about to give to the general that which he had been asking for so long—reinforcements. Nudging Wilkins to follow him, he immediately sought the side of the officer, and after passing the compliments of the day, said:

"General, this is Benjamin Wilkins, an old soldier, and a man who has seen service all over the world." Turning to Wilkins he asked him if what he said was not true, and Wilkins said it was.

The general, with dignity in his manner, looked at Wilkins and then at Wontus, but made no reply. To some men this would have been a hint that their company was not agreeable, but Wontus was too full of his subject to notice anything except the business he was on, and he continued:

"You've asked for reinforcements. I remarked to myself yesterday you should have them, and here they are." The sight was a curious one. Wontus had turned to Wilkins as

he spoke, and was now standing with his hands extended, the palms turned upward, as though to signify that he made the offering freely, and was now done. The different officers of the group looked quizzically at each other, and Wilkins, who had only now guessed the object of the visit, was, for the first time since we have known him, in blank despair. The bargain which he had made at the outset, and which he never expected to completely fill, flashed in his mind, and he could see no avenue of escape. There was only one course left, and that was to meet the matter fully in the face, and trust to fortune what should follow; but not a word escaped his lips.

The smile which had lit up the general's face at the commencement of the interview now broke into a broad laugh, and thanking Mr. Wontus for his kindness, he turned to one of his staff, and said:

"Captain, see that these *reinforcements* are properly mustered in." The officer addressed directed Wontus and Wilkins to follow him, and after the preliminaries had been settled, and the promised money acknowledged, Wilkins was duly "cussed," and found himself a private in the —th Regiment Pennsylvania, where he was duly welcomed by Birkill, Magdus, and the other gentlemen with whom Thomas Thomson had had such an intimate acquaintance a few months before.

Wilkins's shortcomings had been numerous, and as vexatious as they were numerous, but for all that Mr. Wontus could not resist a few tears of genuine sorrow when the former grasped his hand, and in a melodramatic way mentioned the life that was before him, the deeds of bravery he should perform, and the glory which awaited him should he be fortunate enough to return.

"And I hope you may return," cried Mr. Wontus, dashing the tear from his eye. "I shall never forgive myself if you do not return!" He could say no more, and took his departure.

"I have done a patriotic service," said Wontus to Mr. Nidd, in finishing up his account of the affair.

"You've done more," cried Nidd. "You've rid the country, for a while at least, of one of the greatest liars that ever breathed. He's in the right place now, and my only fear is that he'll not stay."

Wontus begged his friend to desist, and for the balance of the day was gloomy and sad. He was busy with his thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THIS CHAPTER IS PRINCIPALLY DEVOTED TO MR. WILKINS, WHO AS A SOLDIER DOES SOME VERY MARVELOUS THINGS—HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE transport which was to carry Mr. Wontus and his friends to Washington lay anchored in the stream, and the hour had come for their departure. Nidd was impatient to be off, but Mr. Wontus held him back, and together they proceeded to bid a last good-bye to the many kind friends and companions they had found in the army. It was pleasing to have the prospect of early intercourse with civilization (war has very little of civilization about it) and the comforts of home; but withal Mr. Wontus was sad. Now that he really was going away from the army, he was sad; yet he smiled and endeavored to be cheerful.

"I hate to leave them," said he, turning to Nidd, as they walked. "Yes, I hate to leave them. I've met some noble men, and I love them; but I am disheartened and weary. There's Blakely, poor fellow! I wish we could induce him to accompany us; but he will not, his soul is in the war. (A pause.) Poor Wilkins! Nidd, do you think he'll be killed?" He spoke as if he expected an immediate answer. He got it.

"Not he!" cried Nidd, "don't worry yourself about that. That interesting and devoutly-to-be-wished event will never occur. A man who is born to be hanged can never be killed in war, drowned at sea, or accidentally killed in any way. Such a man is Benjamin Wilkins."

"You are severe," remarked Mr. Wontus, contemplatively. "I——"

"Here he comes now," interrupted Nidd.

"Good mornin', gents," exclaimed a man dressed in full uniform, which Wontus, after a moment's inspection, discovered to be Wilkins. "Purty heavy weather we boys have, hey?"

Both Nidd and Wontus greeted the new comer pleasantly—the latter almost enthusiastically.

"How's Tom?" asked the soldier; and then followed such a multitude of inquiries concerning the health and prospects of the party as would induce the casual listener to imagine that the questioner had not seen his friends for a long, very long time.

Mr. Wontus proceeded to answer the questions fully, but ere he had fairly commenced Wilkins interrupted by stating that he had been on picket the night before, and performed some most daring service, which, if the gentlemen desired, he would relate. Nidd swore roundly that there was no time to spare, but Wontus was interested, and insisted on hearing the story.

"It won't take a minute," said Wilkins, by way of assuaging Mr. Nidd, and then he commenced.

"It ain't customary," said he, "for new men—new recruits, I mean—to go on picket the first night they git into camp, but I jis tole the cap'n that I'd been there a many a time before, and wouldn't mind takin' a turn now, jist to git my hand in. 'All right, my cove,' says he, and, jist afore dark, I fell in and marched out with the rest of the fellers. You know where Gagese's farm is, out here about four mile, don't you?"

Mr. Wontus said he did not, and Nidd presumed that there wasn't any such place in the United States.

"Well," continued Wilkins, without noticing the remark, "that air farm was the outpost,—the most outest and most dangerous post of 'em all; and when the sergeant asked who'd go out there, I tole him that I would, and smackin' me on the shoulder, he says, says he, 'You'—meanin' me—'you are jist the feller I wanted;' and givin' me instructions to keep a sharp lookout,—the regular thing, you know,—and so forth, he left me. Shiver my timbers! it was a wild and lonely place, sure enough. There wasn't a house, except the one I was at, nor nothin' else livin' anywhere in sight or hearin'. Jist in front there was a woods so thunderin' thick you couldn't see daylight through it if it was daylight. On the right was a thicket of briars, and on the left was a wheat field, with the wheat all a standin'."

"Cut it short!" interrupted Nidd, with a frown.

"Well," continued Wilkins, nodding his head, as though he intended heeding the command, "you just bet it was

lonely; and as I stood there, a lookin' at the stars, which was a twinklin' and winkin' over me, says I, 'Ben,' says I, 'you'd better keep your weather eye open,'—you see I hadn't forgot my sea lingo,—'for this here's a dangerous place, or they'd never put you here.'"

Wontus said "Certainly," and the speaker continued:

"Sharp watchin' and the balmy breezes of the most beautifulest night kind of got the best of me nigh unto about midnight,—I guess it was about midnight,—and I was gettin' sleepy. I knowed what the orders was, but we used to often play off a little when I was in the Crimea, you know; so says I, 'I guess there won't be nobody about this here place any more to-night,' and I commenced a-lookin' for a place to lay myself down. I thought I'd take a little snooze, you know."

Wontus nodded his head, and bent forward with eager attention.

"Well, jist as I was a-goin' to curl myself up on some fodder in the yard, somethin' seemed to tell me that I ought to take a look around first. Well, there wasn't anything in the woods as I could see or hear, nor in the briar thicket neither, and as they was the two most likely places for to look for an enemy, I felt easy, and was just a-goin' to spread myself, when I looked over the wheat-field, and saw somethin'. It wasn't a movin' nor nothin', but I remarked to myself, 'Ben,' says I, 'that air wheat-field was as smooth as the Croton basin when you come here, and now what in the thunder is them air stumps a-doin' there?' I couldn't see how they got there, you know."

Again Mr. Wontus signified that he understood, by nodding his head.

"I looked at the stumps—I guess there was a half-a-dozen of 'em—for a while, and then says I, to myself, 'Them's too big for stumps. What in the thunder *can* they be?' Well, the more I looked the more I wasn't satisfied, and then it come to me of a suddint that it was my duty to find out, so I commenced a skirmishin' in a small way to dewelop 'em. I rather felt a little shaky at first, but then, says I, 'This is your duty;' and I made up my mind to do it. From me to the wheat-field must have been about as far as from that air tree to us (he pointed out a tree which stood off some sixty paces distant from where he was standing), and the objecks was a standin'

among the wheat, jist a little inside the fence. Well, the first thing I did was to take off my cartridge-box and fill my pockets with cartridges,—I wanted to be free and easy, you see,—and then I took my gun, and, keepin' in the shade of the trees, sneaked into the woods and made for the field. It was so infernal dark I had to feel my way by keepin' the pints of the compass in my head, and then feelin' which was the rough side of the bark of the trees."

At this juncture the narrator entered into a lengthy description of how he made his way through the woods without making any noise, and from that branched off on to the dangers which constantly surround an outpost in an enemy's country. Wontus, who was already much interested in the story, listened to this part of it for a long while in silence; but Wilkins displayed no signs of returning to the interesting part of his narrative. He had evidently forgotten what he had commenced to talk about.

"You got through the woods, did you?" asked Wontus, impatiently, by way of calling Wilkins's attention to what he appeared to have forgotten.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed the reinforcement, as if it had just occurred to him that the most important part of the story was to come, "I 'most forgot. Well, as I was sayin', I sneaked through the woods, and when I got to the fence I riz up, and by gracious! what do you think I seen?"

"What?" exclaimed Wontus, as though it was expected that he should say something.

"Why, sir, what I had took for stumps was nothin' more'n six fellers on horseback! There they was a-standin' jist like stone, and I might have thought they was stone if it hadn't been that I could hear 'em whisperin' about how sharp their knives was and how straight they could shoot with their pistols."

"The mere recital of it makes me shiver," said Wontus, shuddering; "but what did you do? Six men, well mounted and armed, were too much for you, eh?"

"Thinks I to myself," continued Wilkins, in his off-hand, matter-of-fact way, without noticing Mr. Wontus's remark, "what's to be done now? and I stood my gun up against the fence and took a good long think. You see, I didn't want to call up the support, and yet I wanted them fellers to know that there was one man in this here big army of ours what had

an eye on 'em, if there wasn't any more. I was a-thinkin' this thing over, when all at once an idea popped into me head—I had a plan. The night wasn't very light, you know, and thinks I to myself, thinks I, I'll jist crawl up to you gentlemen in the wheat and ram my bayonet through you, one at a time. You see, bayonets don't make no noise, and as the fellers was standin' about twenty yards apart, I concluded I could do the job purty easy. It was a purty heavy undertakin', wasn't it?"

Wontus thought it was, very.

"Most men, I think," continued the speaker, "would a' turned back, but I'd seen too much in India and other places to do anything of that kind, and, stoopin' down, I crawled under the fence and pulled myself along on my belly until I got right under the first feller's horse. I was jist a goin' to give 'em what the Irish call a prog, when the feller, says he to the feller next to him, 'reckon it's about time, ain't it?'

"'Don't know,' says the other feller.

"'Who's at this here post?' says the first feller.

"'Don't know exactly, but think it's that feller Wilkins.'"

Wontus uttered an exclamation of surprise, and Wilkins continued:

"Yes, and I was surprised, too, when I heard my name mentioned by such as them, and I commenced to think maybe I was agoin' to hurt some of my friends. I was jist a thinkin' this when I heard the other feller say, says he:

"'What kind of a feller is he?'—meanin' me.

"'Not much,' says he; 'I'm a thinkin' he'd run if you fired a pop-gun at him.'

"That was enough; it had raised my dander. I didn't wait to hear no more. That air last remark settled his hash, and jam! went my bayonet through his heart, and he tumbled off his horse dead—stone dead."

"Terrible!" groaned Mr. Wontus, wiping the perspiration from his face, while Nidd, after casting a rather severe stare at Wilkins, walked away whistling.

"The other feller kept up a talkin' for awhile, but seein' the dead feller's horse turn around and commence eatin' the wheat, I guess he thought that the feller was tired of talkin', and he soon quit too. And jist so I went up to each individual of 'em, until I came to the sixth,—the last man. Now says I to myself, says I, Ben, things is gettin' more even: man to man;

so jist suppose you make yourself known, and kill this feller in a gentleman-like and soldiery manner. I thought the idea was a good one, and acted on it.

"'Pleasant evenin', sir,' says I, standin' up right alongside of the feller's horse. I couldn t see his face, but, by gravy! I knowed somethin' was up, for it seemed to me that he 'most bounced out of his saddle.

"'Who are you, sir?' says he, a recoverin' himself, and speakin' as if he wasn't skeered.

"'Ben Wilkins, of the great Yankee army, sir,' says I.

"Well, sir," continued the "reinforcement," after a brief pause, "you jist ought to of seen it; it was a picter and no mistake. The minute I mentioned my name, the feller jist swagged over to one side, and I commenced to think he was a-goin' to fall off for sure.

"'Wilkins?' says he, 'of the —th Pennsylvany?'

"'The same, sir,' says I, as polite as pie.

"There wasn't nothin' said for some time, so I jist kept my gun up and a good ready on, for fear of an accident, you know.

"'Wilkins?' says he again, a thinkin' out loud. I was jist agoin' for to say somethin' when *he* sung out with a yell, 'A struggle for life and liberty!' and made a slash at me with his sabre. But he wasn't quick enough,—he didn't know his man,—and in about a twinklin' he was spread out on the ground as dead as a herrin'. Well, of course, that was the end of it, and so I jist gathered the horses and things together and waited for daylight and the relief to come."

"Astonishing!" cried Wontus, giving vent to the excitement wrought up by Wilkins's narrative. "And do your officers know of this?" he asked.

"Well, no," remarked Wilkins complacently, as though the affair had been quite a usual adventure. "No, they don't know it, leastwise as far as I know. When the sergeant come up to relieve me this mornin', I jist turned the horses and the men's 'coutrements over to him, and told him that if he'd go over in the wheat-field he might find the men what they used to belong to."

"'Where are they?' says he, purty skeered.

"'Gone to glory,' says I.

"'Dead?' says he.

"'Dead as smoked herrin,' says I.

"He wouldn't believe me till we went over and looked, and there they was a layin' jist where they fell, each of 'em with a hole right up under his ribs and through his gizzard. I told the sergeant how I'd come to do it. He made some remarks about the thing bein' hard to beat; and says he, 'I'll make a report of the affair to the cap'n.' 'Sergeant,' says I, 'I don't want nothin' of the kind done;' and then we fixed it up how we'd tell that I'd found the horses and things in the woods, and then we come into camp; and as I ain't heard nothin' about it since, why I guess the sergeant's a keepin' his word."

"Wilkins—Benjamin Wilkins," cried Wontus, taking his hand in both of his, "you have performed a noble, a heroic act: an act which deserves to be handed down to posterity; an act which does not have its parallel in the annals of history; an act which fairly eclipses romance; an act which throws the deeds of knights errant and the crusaders into insignificance, and for which you should be well rewarded. I am glad you have told me of it. I am on the eve of departure for home; but I have friends of power and influence in the army, and you shall be remembered. I am proud of you for your noble, brave acts; I can then set them down as my own; and I feel that I shall leave a representative behind me whose prowess must win him laurels of imperishable fame, and to whom the War Department and Congress must sooner or later——"

"Come, come!" exclaimed Nidd, drawing near and taking Mr. Wontus by the arm; "the time is up, and we must go."

"Good-bye, Benjamin Wilkins," cried Wontus, relinquishing his representative's hand and moving off; "you must take good care of yourself, and let me hear from you frequently. If at any time you are in want don't hesitate to communicate the fact, and——" Further remarks were cut short by Nidd dragging his friend out of speaking distance.

"Oh, he's a wonderful man! I have said it before, and I repeat it now," exclaimed Wontus; and then he went over to Nidd the story just related by the new recruit.

"It's a lie! a lie cut from the whole cloth, and I'll wager my life on it!" Nidd uttered these words with cutting severity, and by the time the gentlemen had reached headquarters the two had had very high words concerning the veracity of the new recruit.

"I will find out," cried Nidd, as Wontus met his friend,

Colonel Blakely, and in a moment his long legs were striding toward the camp of Wilkins's regiment. Once here, he soon found the first sergeant of Wilkins's company, and through him learned that no detail—not a man—from his company or regiment had been on picket the night before, and that no horses, or anything else, had been brought into camp since their arrival at Harrison's Landing. This was just the information which Nidd expected, but now his desire was to convince Wontus that he was right, and that Wilkins was all he had said he was. Accompanied by the sergeant, he immediately sought his friend, and in his presence the following dialogue took place between him (Nidd) and the sergeant:

Nidd. "Do you know Benjamin Wilkins?"

Sergeant. "I do."

Nidd. "How long has he been in your regiment?"

Sergeant. "He was mustered into my company yesterday morning."

Nidd. "Describe him."

The sergeant described Benjamin Wilkins.

Nidd, turning to Wontus. "Our man, eh?"

Wontus. "Yes."

Nidd, to the sergeant. "Was there any detail from your company for picket or other duty last evening?"

Sergeant. "No."

Nidd. "Sure?"

Sergeant. "Sure."

Nidd. "Any from your regiment?"

Sergeant. "No."

Nidd. "Sure?"

Sergeant. "Sure."

Nidd. "Was Benjamin Wilkins out of camp last night?"

Sergeant. "No."

Nidd. "Sure?"

Sergeant. "He bunked with me, and it was as much as I could do to get him awake at reveille this morning."

Nidd. "Any horses brought into camp this morning?"

Sergeant. "No."

Nidd. "Sure?"

Sergeant. "Of course I am."

"Satisfied?" asked Nidd, with a sardonic smile on his face, turning to Wontus.

Wontus looked pained and perplexed, but he said he was satisfied, and the sergeant was dismissed with the most profound thanks of his interrogator.

Mr. Wontus stood with his eyes upon the ground. He had been deceived before, more than once, yet he had trusted. Now his confidence in his fellow-man was seriously shaken. He could not comprehend why it was that Wilkins should tell him such an uncalled-for falsehood, and he was more sorry than angry. It is probable that he would have delivered some remarks concerning the incident, but he was prevented by Mr. Nidd calling his attention to the ringing of the steamboat-bell, and bidding his friend Blakely a most affectionate good-by, he followed Nidd to the landing and thence on board the boat, where Thomas Thomson was already waiting to receive him. In the bustle of getting away the affair was forgotten, and ere the day was half spent the frowning walls of Fortress Monroe were passed, and the party on their way to Washington.

On arriving at the capital Nidd at once sought an interview with the President, and spread his views concerning sundry things connected with the war before him. While he was doing this Mr. Wontus had found his friend Moxley, and through him learned many things concerning Mrs. Flick, some of which were agreeable and some were not. Among the first were the kind words which the lady always used when speaking of him (Wontus) during his absence. It was his nature to look upon the agreeable side of life, so he forgot the details of her lamentations over the death of a man whom he looked upon as a villain, and thought only of the joy she expressed when remembering his own kindness. He reiterated to himself time and again that he did not love the lady, that is, he didn't think he did, for he saw nothing in his actions toward her that made him appear, in even the remotest sense, like the lovers he had read of in the works of fiction or had seen on the stage. But he dreamed of her the first night he spent in Washington, for all that.

The following morning Gascon Nidd suddenly left Washington, and our hero was left with none of his original party, save Thomas Thomson, to do him honor.

CHAPTER XXXII.

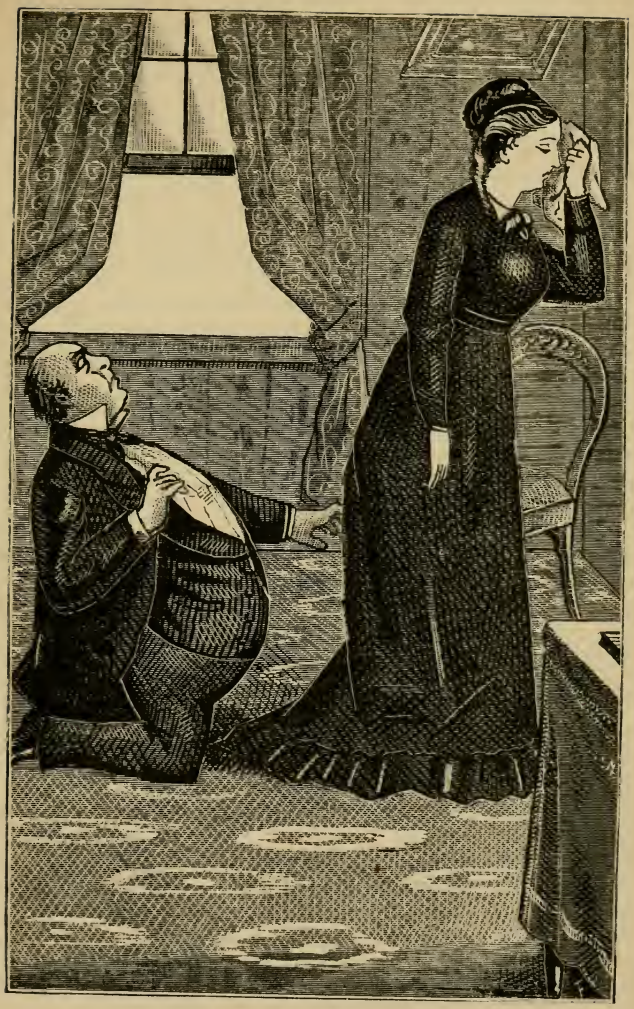
IN WHICH MR. NIDD REVISITS THE QUAKER CITY, BECOMES A PARTICIPANT IN A FIREMAN'S RIOT, AND IS A JILTED MAN.

THAT Nidd's sudden departure from Washington did not excite any particular comment on the part of either of the leading gentlemen of the corps, is probably due to the fact that each one was preoccupied by other things. In fact, Mr. Wontus confidentially communicated to Thomas Thomson that he would feel very much freer in Mr. Nidd's absence than in his presence. As for Nidd, he took his seat in the cars as though he was glad of the opportunity, and before the train had commenced to move, bid his friends good-bye, and settled himself into a sleeping position, and in that way indicated, if he did not utter it, that he had nothing more to say. He was going to sleep. As the train sped along Mr. Nidd's rest was uneasy. He was dreamy, and he saw a great many things that were startling and strange; but looming up from the chaos there always came a maze of long narrow streets, dark lanes and narrow back-alleys. Hovering over and about these streets and alleys was the form of a woman. She came as though riding on the edge of a mass of fleecy clouds, and upon her head was a golden chaplet. Her form, save her head and face, was lost in the gauzy drapery which fell in graceful profusion about her, and then lost itself in the mist. Nidd shook himself two or three times, and wondered what could ever have put such nonsense in his head; but when again he dozed, the dream came back as before, with the addition that the face of the woman in the clouds bore a striking likeness to that of Mrs. Squirm. Baltimore was reached and passed before he succeeded in waking himself thoroughly, and he was almost sure, as he opened his eyes, that the form of E. P. M. Higginson, otherwise Scribendi, had just passed him. But he was in a condition of uncertainty, and the knowledge that he had left his rival with the

army on the banks of the James made him place that gentleman among the characters of his dream, and by the time he arrived in Philadelphia he had made up his mind as to the course of action he should pursue concerning the object of his visit.

It was night when he alighted from the cars, and as his clothes were neither of a fashionable cut or very fine, or his baggage of a very striking description, he quickly emerged from the depot and thence through the throng of hackmen, never once stopping or heeding anybody until he had reached the opposite side of the street. Here he stopped and gazed along the wide straight avenue. He had made up his mind, while on the train, to proceed at once to the house of his adored, but now that it was close at hand and the hour was somewhat late, he commenced to question the propriety of the visit. He turned the subject over in his mind many times as he walked slowly along, and had just passed South Street when he was startled by the cry of fire. Now almost any sort of excitement had a charm for Mr. Nidd, providing he could view it from a perfectly safe distance, and now that he had nothing particular to do and the firemen commenced running past him, and the bells were banging in every direction, he stopped and looked on with pleasurable interest. There was considerable noise in every direction, but far beyond him, toward the centre of the city, there came up a dull roaring sound, among which he could distinguish an occasional cheer or yell of defiance.

He had often heard of those little pleasantries which the firemen were accustomed to amuse themselves with, and which the newspapers spoke of under the head of riots; but as he stood there listening, it never occurred to him that the roaring or the yells emanated from any such occasion. Gradually the sounds had been nearing him, and now they broke full upon him, as a throng of surging, struggling men, among which he could hear the clatter of bells and see the burnished brass mountings of an engine, came full in view from around a neighboring corner. Onward they came, now one side of the street and then the other; and then, as if by some immutable law, compelled to do it, choking up the very street itself, until from house to house every inch of space was filled by a human form. He stood and gazed, and was passing the time pleas-



"'YOU THINK ME ALONE AND DEFENSELESS,' SHE CONTINUED."

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antly. Thus far he had been a passive spectator of the scene, but as the crowd came surging along the street, now on this side and then on that, he became more interested, and turning to an urchin who stood by his side, he asked the reason of all the excitement. "They're a racin'," said the boy, and then Nidd and his young friend walked out into the street, that they might be better able to observe what was passing.

This slight movement on Mr. Nidd's part was followed by most disastrous results. A moment after he had reached the cobble-stones there seemed to be a lull in the excitement. The bells had ceased clanging, and the engine stood stationary in the street. The lull was but momentary, for now the noise broke forth with a violence thrice multiplied, and, with frightful yells and cheers, the surging, struggling mass came sweeping down, and ere Nidd was well aware of it, he was caught in the tide and borne onward. Howling, shouting men were on all sides of him, looking like demons in the dull glare of the street lamps, and before he could escape from the stream he had seen enough to convince him that his position was precarious in the extreme. He struggled manfully to escape from the throng, and once or twice succeeded, only to find himself caught up again in a moment and carried back into the *mêlée*. Panting and excited, he at length reached the sidewalk, and sought the shelter of a tree-box, which he clasped in his arms as though it was the dearest friend he had on earth. Onward swept the crowd, but the worst was over. Men and half-grown boys were still thronging the sidewalks; but he heeded them not, but stood congratulating himself upon his escape from such imminent danger. It was now plain to him that what he had just escaped from was a fireman's fight, and he shook his head in a threatening way, as though nothing was wanting but power for him to forever do away with the peculiar amusement. He was engaged in this when a young gentleman, wearing a red shirt, stepped up to him, and asked him what he run with.

In an instant Nidd was on his mettle. "I run with my legs," he replied.

"Here's one of 'em!" shouted the man to some of his companions in the street; and without further ado, one-quarter of the corps of observation, now in Philadelphia, was felled to the ground, and then most cruelly beaten.

It was morning when Nidd came clearly and fully to himself, and found himself within the walls of a hospital. He felt sore and was bruised, and his valise was missing. But his attending physician said that there was no great harm done, and that he was at liberty to leave the institution at any time. I presume that most places come in for a share of the curses of those who are unfortunate within their bounds. Hence I venture nothing when I say that Nidd cursed the Quaker City. A visit to one of its residents, and he would leave it, and forever! Circumstances alter cases.

It was late in the day when he presented himself at a familiar door on Walnut Street, and boldly pulled the bell. No answer came, and he pulled again. As he stood on the step, he thought that he heard suppressed laughter near him, but no form was visible. Could it be that the charming woman was peeping at him from between the blinds? It might be, and yet he could not make himself believe that any woman could so far deny herself of the pleasure of his company as to keep him waiting even for a moment.

"You're too late," said a voice, in answer to the last pull. And looking up, Mr. Nidd saw the face of Miss Bridget, Mrs. Squirm's maid of all-work.

"Ah! Miss Bridget," cried Nidd, assuming his most bewitching smile, "you've not all retired?"

"Retired?" cried the woman. "An' faith, what time do you think we retire?"

"But you said I was too late," said Nidd. "My compliments to Mrs. Squirm, if you please."

"An' sure, are you in earnest?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Nidd, decidedly.

"An' you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?" demanded Nidd.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" laughed the woman.

"Well?" cried Nidd, as though expecting an answer.

"An' sure, she's married."

"Married!" said Mr. Nidd, as though he might have misunderstood the remark.

"To Mr. Higginson, who came up from the army last night for that very purpose, and they're now takin' a travelin' for a few days." Nidd waited to hear no more. With an exclamation too violent for those who read this to pronounce, he

hurriedly left the house, turned the first corner, and was out of sight.

How quickly and how wonderfully will "circumstances alter cases." When the austere conveyancer believed himself to be the successful wooer, the long, narrow streets, dark lanes, and narrow back alleys, were famous and most desirable property. Now that he was jilted, the whole property, streets, lanes, back alleys, and all, were most undesirable and worthless. But Nidd did not blame himself, for in after years he was frequently heard to say that had it not been for the firemen (and he swore when he said it), he would undoubtedly have been a twice-married man. A matter of a few hours had settled his fate. That night he left for New York, and the following morning found his office-shutters open, and the owner, wearing the same look as of old, standing in the doorway. He was already looking for business.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CATCHES MR. WONTUS IN THE TOILS OF LOVE, AND AFTER SEVERAL DISAPPOINTMENTS RENDERS HIM HAPPY.

With Nidd at home in New York, it now becomes necessary to return to Washington. The moment Mr. Wontus saw the train move out of the depot, he returned to the hotel and made preparations for a visit to the widow. He thought that he knew her quite well, and he felt every confidence in his ability to acquit himself with credit. Feeling this way, he walked boldly up the street, and just as boldly knocked at the door. He gave his name to the person who opened the door, and was ushered into the parlor. A moment more and the lady was before him. The bravery and confidence of Mr. Wontus faded away like a breath when Mrs. Flick entered the room. When she thanked him for his kindness to her, he felt miserable; when she came to question him concerning the death of her husband, he wished that he had not come.

"Are you sure it was him?" she asked.

It now became necessary for Wontus to tell her how he knew, beyond question, that private Flick, of the —th Pennsylvania, and Major Flick, of the —th Alabama, were identical, and in doing this he unintentionally and thoughtlessly introduced the name of Colonel Blakely.

"*He* there?" she cried, the tears for the first time coming to her eyes. "He there, a witness to the death of my husband! Heavenly Father, thy will be done!" She had been leaning with her arm upon the table, but when she finished speaking she buried her face in her hands, and, leaning forward, sobbed as though her very heart was bursting.

Wontus was no philosopher, at least not where tears were; he generally acted from the impulse of his heart, and now his heart prompted him to soothe the sorrow-stricken woman.

"Don't cry, madam," he said, rising to his feet and speaking in the most pitiful accents. "Don't cry. He was a—was a—he died game, madam, very game." Had Wontus been a cock-fighter or a pugilist, it is probable that he could not have chosen more fitting, or at least more expressive language; but to a refined woman, deeply stricken with grief, he felt sure his words sounded harsh and coarse, and he sought to improve his expressions of sympathy. He tried again and again, but without success. "What *am* I to do?" he cried. "I have made a mistake; he did not die game; that is, he died game enough; but it's not that that I want to say. He spoke of you fondly, madam, very fondly, and I saw him buried with honor, and with my own eyes. His wound wasn't very painful; it was the internal hemorrhage which caused his death." Mr. Wontus ceased speaking, feeling that his words were unsuitable to the occasion, and the lady's sobs cut into his heart like a knife.

"Don't weep," he cried, almost beside himself, and speaking in accents of the deepest commiseration. "I beg of you, madam, don't weep so; I know it is sad, but there is a brighter day dawning." As he spoke he glided to her side, and sank upon his knees and clasped the folds of her dress with his hands. Neither by look or action did she appear to notice him. He thought he was doing better. "I knew your husband well; he was not deserving—I mean he was deserving. But do, madam, do stop weeping." He grasped her hand as he spoke, and held it. She did not offer to with-

draw it. Tears stood in his eyes, but his face was flushed. As he afterwards was heard to say, "a million thoughts" passed through his head, but his lips would not articulate a syllable; a strange lump came into his throat, and his tongue was parched and dry. For a moment there was silence.

"Madam—Mrs. Flick—Catherine," he cried, at length, "your husband is dead,—I love you!" Another word would have choked him. I cannot undertake to describe him as he knelt—rather sat—on the floor. There was too much in the scene for anything, save the imagination, to picture. Had it been so ordered that he should be hung at the expiration of one minute if he did not speak, Wontus would have been no more and our story ended.

It is probable that his silence more than his declaration caused the woman to raise her head from the table, and throw her swimming, sorrowful eyes full upon him. Brief as the look was, it sent a thrill through Wontus's frame, and although he quailed beneath it, his knees instinctively crawled forward and brought him nearer.

"My dear Mrs. ——," his remarks were cut short by the lady.

"Cease, sir! cease, I pray you," she cried; "do not add insult to the other miseries which weigh upon me. You have been kind, nay, generous, to me; but rather to have you presume because of your generosity, I would beg my bread from door to door!" As she spoke she rose to her feet and stood looking upon our hero with flashing eyes and heaving bosom. "You think me alone and defenseless," she continued, "but you mistake. I have a father and fond friends who will protect me when I am unable to protect myself. I am a Southern woman, sir, and feel deeply the grief and insult that has been put upon me, but not too deeply to resent it, sir. I have to acknowledge your kindness,—your alms; would to heaven it were not so!—but it shall be returned to you; yes, sir; and with interest." She ceased speaking and sank into her chair. Wontus saw now that he had been hasty; that he had made a serious mistake; it was an error,—not an error of judgment, for at that moment he had none,—but an error which sprang from an honest and honorable impulse over which he had no control. He was deeply wounded; he felt that he had been misunderstood; and as he gathered himself from the floor and

stood brushing the dust from his knees, he endeavored to explain, but every idea which came into his head seemed but to add to the dilemma, and he resolved to go. He would leave Washington immediately.

"Madam," said he, with a sort of subdued dignity, taking up his hat and walking toward the door, "you have misunderstood me; you have cruelly——" He could say no more. He opened the door without knowing exactly how, and walked out into the street and made his way directly to the hotel. Thomas Thomson was standing in the hall when his master rushed into the house and up the stairs. He noticed that there was something a little out of the usual routine on his mind, but he was entirely unprepared for the burst of mingled sorrow and rage which greeted him when he entered the room.

"Thomas," cried Mr. Wontus, turning over the papers which lay on the table, and looking in all directions for something, he knew not what, "we shall leave this infernal place on the next train. Not a word, Thomas! Have everything in readiness to leave." He spoke determinedly. "What time does the next train leave? We shall go in the first one, Thomas, no matter where it goes to. We leave here immediately." To all things Thomas answered as best he could; but not knowing anything about the departure of the railroad trains, he said so. At any other time Wontus would have diligently searched the newspapers to find the time schedule, but now there appeared to be no time for doing anything.

"Tommy, you go down to the clerk's office; tell him to have our bill ready, and ask what time the next train leaves for New York, or anywhere else." Wontus spoke with less excitement than had characterized him a few moments before, and as Thomson left the room, a painful shade of sorrow came over his face, and he sat down and rested his head in his hand.

"My life," he soliloquized, with a groan, "has been a mistake. I am an unhappy, miserable wretch. What do I live for? I visited the army, hoping that I might be of some service; but I have done nothing, literally nothing, and hundreds of dollars have been squandered for nothing. I will return to New York. (A pause.) Why are there no convents, no nunneries for men like there are for women? I have money; why not institute one myself, and be the first inmate?

(His face brightened for a moment, and then again assumed its former shade of sorrow.) No, no; I'm a fool. No man has a right, nobody, woman or man, has a right to shut themselves up from the world. (A pause.) I have been this woman's friend. Shall I confess it,—that which is now so plain,—I have loved her and she spurns me. I gave her nothing in charity; I gave as I would give to any human being who needed."

He ceased speaking, and for a moment looked at the floor in silence. "Yes, yes," he continued; "one such mistake in the life of a man is enough. Henceforth and forever, woman shall be my aversion!"

He took up a newspaper and commenced to read. The news from the West and South was most cheering. New Orleans, under the old flag, was prospering; Morgan was being driven from Kentucky; Grant and Farragut were preparing for the reduction of Vicksburg, and Burnside was winning new victories in the Carolinas. He read these things, but they had lost their interest.

It was while he was reading of Morgan's raid into Kentucky that he came across an item which seemed to attract his attention, without his desiring it. Colonel Blakely had given him the name of Mrs. Flick's father, and now that same name, and from Alabama too, stood before him as one among the killed in the fight at Cynthiana. A thrill passed through his frame as he read. His first thought was to carry the paper to Mrs. Flick; his second, to say nothing about it, and follow out his original intentions. He had just made up his mind to the latter line of action when Tommy entered the room and announced that the first train for New York left at 5.30, but that trains left every hour or two for Baltimore.

"Very good, very good," replied Mr. Wontus, his mind wandering to the scene of the morning. He saw nothing wrong in it; perhaps a little improper, but certainly nothing wrong; and then he fell to silent musing. It was while he was thus engaged that a servant knocked at the door, and presented a note to Thomas Thomson, who handed it to Wontus. He took it mechanically, and glanced at the superscription—

"O. WONTUS, ESQ.,

"*Swindelem's Hotel,*

"*Present.* *Washington.*"

For Mr. Wontus to receive a note was something which did not often occur; to receive one in Washington, where he was so little acquainted, was certainly extraordinary, and so he appeared to consider it. There are times when men who have the sharpest eyes seem to regard it as highly necessary that they should be the possessors of a pair of spectacles, or something of that character. This was Wontus's condition now. The moment he saw the note he noticed that the superscription was in a lady's hand, and that it was addressed to him, yet he did not offer to open it. First he held it a long way off and to the right; then he brought it closer and to the left; then he drew it still closer, and again held it at arm's length. "From a woman? Certainly!" He asked the question and answered it himself. Then he turned it over and looked at the back, and then the edges, as though he expected the paper inside to break forth of its own accord and spread itself before him. Now he took it to the window, and as he did so the sad look which had clouded his face a moment before was forced aside by a smile. It was really an important occasion, and quite unexpected.

During all this time Thomas Thomson stood watching Wontus closely, momentarily expecting some new development to grow out of this most unusual, and, to him, unaccountable event. But Wontus heeded him not. The man who but a few moments before could not wait a moment was now seemingly in no hurry whatever.

Mr. Wontus having looked in vain for the envelope to burst of its own accord, remarked to himself that he should keep cool, and drawing a chair to the window he took a lingering, questioning sort of farewell look at the envelope, and then leisurely took out his knife, and inserted the blade under the flaps of the cover. His action was that of a cool man, but his hand shook nervously. The letter was before him, and read as follows:

"O. WONTUS, ESQ.:

"RESPECTED SIR,—I beg of you to pardon me if I intrude, but I feel that I owe you so much for your kindness that it would be unchristian-like and ungrateful in me to permit you to leave the city without thanking you.

"I was deeply pained this morning, yet I do not mention this

in excuse. Perhaps in calmer moments we might both act differently. If this note reaches you and you do not consider it too much trouble to call, I shall be glad to see you this evening. "I am, sir, very respectfully,

"*Thursday.* C. L. FLICK."

This was all that was needed to change the whole current of Wontus's present life. The weight which had laid so heavily upon his heart since his confession of love was lifted off in a moment, and he felt lighter in the body by twenty pounds and younger in the heart by twenty years. His joy partook of an effervescing character, and he laughed heartily and did many extravagant and unusual things. Occasionally he would stop and gaze upon the note for a moment, and then go off again, until at length excessive heat and exhaustion compelled him to be seated. He laid the note before him, then resting his forehead on his hands and his elbows on the table, he gazed upon the note in silent admiration.

"The clerk says the bill will be ready when you are ready," remarked Tommy, furnishing the information which he had been sent to secure.

Wontus lifted his head for a moment and glared at his man in silence.

"Everything are ready," continued Tommy, "and we can leave——"

"Leave!" cried Wontus, "Leave! We'll never leave!" As he spoke he struck the table a violent blow with his fist. No, he would never leave. These were his thoughts at that moment, for but one line of the note found a place in his head, and that was the line which asked him to call. Call! He would have undertaken to dance a jig on the Vice-President's desk in the Senate chamber!

"Thomas,"—Mr. Wontus spoke with a forced calmness, which he intended to be terrible,—"ink, paper, pens; this letter must be answered."

Thomas merely said "Yes, sir," and was out of the door in a jiffy (whatever that is). In due time he returned, and the process of writing a fitting reply to the lady's note was commenced. Sheet after sheet was written, and destroyed almost as quickly as it was written; and evening came and the reply was no nearer written than before.

"Tom" (it was a very extraordinary occasion when Mr. Wontus addressed Mr. Thomson by his abbreviated title), "do you know where Third Street is?"

Thomson answered that he did.

"I am nervous and unsettled," continued Wontus, aside. "I must send a reply, but I can't write it." With this, he turned to his man and repeated the question already answered.

"You will go there," he continued, "and tell Mrs. Flick that, owing to business engagements,—owing to *business* engagements, Tommy, do you hear?—I shall be compelled to remain in the city much longer than I expected, and therefore,—and *therefore*, Tommy, I shall do myself the honor of calling upon her this evening. Be particular, and deliver the message in the same dignified manner that I deliver it to you. Do you hear?"

Thomas answered that he did hear, and in a moment had rushed from the room and was going down the stairs, taking three steps at a leap. Suddenly it occurred to him that while it was true that he did know where Third Street was, yet he was entirely ignorant as to what particular part of Third Street Mrs. Flick might be found at. He turned back with many misgivings, and, like other men who do similar things and think of them a moment too late, he blamed himself for his stupidity.

When he returned to the room Mr. Wontus was still gazing on the note, and he was smiling, as though well satisfied with himself and all the world. "Ah, Thomas, what now?" he asked.

Thomas explained, and in due time had full directions, and set out to deliver the message which Wontus had found impossible to write.

During Thomson's absence, the meditations of Wontus were varied in the extreme. That he loved, he no longer refused to believe. He had loved before, when he was a young man, but until he confessed his passion for the widow Flick his love had never found expression in words. And now a new question was presented. He had long since given up the idea of taking a wife; he had commenced to look upon himself as a man who was incapable of making himself or anybody else happy. He had money; he had everything but courage; and now that he had confessed his passion for the widow he felt that he was in duty bound to follow it up. But how? That

was what puzzled him. He had commenced to wish that he had not paid any attention to the note, had conducted himself as though he had never received it, when his meditations were interrupted by the return of Thomson with the message that the lady was glad that Mr. Wontus's *business* had prevented him from leaving the city; also, that she would be pleased to see him.

There was nothing deceitful about Mr. Wontus. He was terribly in earnest, and the very honesty of his intentions made him believe and feel that he had gone too far to recede, and that the lady had a right, and would therefore expect, more than a mere declaration to spring from what had already transpired. This was the construction he placed upon her note, and this was the feeling which governed him as he set about making his toilet for the visit.

When a man makes himself believe that he *must*, willing or unwilling, do some certain thing, there is generally more or less of what is called desperation about it than if he did it without making himself believe that it was necessary. Wontus had made himself believe that this visit must be paid. He had entirely ignored the scene of the morning, and as he stood once more in the little parlor on Third Street his mind was busy with the future.

The lady, neatly attired in black, entered the room, and Wontus's heart at once jumped to his mouth. He bowed ceremoniously and awkwardly. Her first movement was to walk directly up to him and take his hand in hers, and with sorrowful, but dignified accents, to ask his pardon. He would have pardoned her if she had been a murderess; but no word escaped his lips.

"Perhaps I may have been wrong," she said, with a quiet dignity, which the knowledge that she was doing right made most affecting, "in asking you to come here this evening——"

"Wrong? Oh, no, madam; not at all; not at all, I assure you," replied Wontus, without waiting for the sentence to be finished.

"You have been very kind," continued the lady, without noticing the interruption.

"Don't mention,—don't speak of it," again interposed Wontus.

He had seated himself, and, with an effort to appear calm

and collected, had inserted his thumbs into the tops of his trousers' pockets, and was engaged in playing a tattoo with his fingers on the waistband of his pantaloons.

"And the recollection of your kindness has induced me——" continued the lady.

"Please forget it; we'll both forget it," remarked Wontus, nervously.

"To look back," again continued the lady, "and——"

"Back!" almost shouted Wontus, drawing his hands from his pockets. He was growing excited—why or wherefore he could not tell. "Back! Let us look forward—forward! I am sorry, too, but not for myself—no, not for myself."

The lady looked at him for a moment, and, then, as if she feared a repetition of the morning's scene, arose to her feet, and remarked:

"Mr. Wontus, I find, sir, that it will become necessary for me to leave you——"

"Leave *me!*" gasped Wontus, a tumult of thoughts aggravating his brain. "Your note! Yes, madam, your note!" He could proceed no further.

"My note, sir," continued the lady, mildly, "had no reference to the past, except insomuch as your kindness was concerned. You will please accept my thanks, and allow me to bid you adieu. I cannot listen to you more. I shall always remember you with feelings of the highest respect, and my constant wish will be for your well-being and happiness. It will be useless for you to call upon me again, sir, for I leave for Alabama—for the home of my father—by the next train. I have my permit to cross the lines."

During the remarks of the lady Wontus had sat in speechless astonishment. He saw that he had made a mistake somewhere, and he was ready to sink under the pressure of shame which crowded upon him. The words of the speaker had found a place in his head, as do the pictures of a dream. He certainly had not heard them, yet they were there; not clear and distinct, but in a confused mass, in which his own thoughts and conclusions were oddly mixed. His whole acquaintance, from the moment he first saw her at his former lodgings to the present, floated mistily before him; but when she spoke of returning to the home of her father, his hand instinctively wandered to his pocket, and drawing a newspaper

therefrom, he hastily ran his eyes over the columns, and then waited for her to conclude.

"Madam," he cried, as the lady was about leaving the room, "I—I am very, most deeply—it was purely an accident; but I considered it my duty—you will excuse me—but—but your father——"

Tears came unbidden to his eyes, and handing the lady the paper, he pointed to the paragraph containing the news of her father's death, and turned away.

There was a certain degree of studied calmness and gentility about Mrs. Flick at all times. She was one of those peculiar kind of people who can do the most unexpected things so very naturally, that a short acquaintance was enough to make you look upon her as being something above the common average of women. This was her education. Underlying that, like the shining, valuable gold which lies hidden amid the rocks far down in the bowels of the earth, was her nature. We know—I mean the reader and myself know—that she was deeply sensible, and, therefore, thankful to Mr. Wontus for his unasked—I may add, unlooked for—kindness. It is also probable that his confession of love had some influence upon her, for the heart which does not appreciate the pure, unselfish love of a fellow-being—be he or she ever so humble—even if it is unreciprocated, must, indeed, be barren and hard.

She took the paper from our hero's hand, and the muscles of her face relaxed, and she looked less annoyed. Nearing the window, she looked at the paragraph beneath her finger and read the awful news. The silence was unbroken by a breath. The delicate peach-color gradually faded from her cheeks, and an ashy paleness overspread her face. The paper fell from her hands to the floor, and her large eyes wandered with a vacant stare about the room. No tears came up to soothe and mingle their sympathies with the overwhelming grief. Her lips were closed, dry, and bloodless; she stood like one suddenly stricken by the hand of Him on high, and Wontus looked on in awe. Silently she sank to her knees upon the floor; her hands were clasped in an attitude of prayer, and her eyes were turned heavenward. Her body swayed to and fro for a moment, and, but for the loving arm of him that she would have sent from her, she would have fallen prostrate on the floor. She had

fainted, and now lay pillowed on the breast of her truest friend.

Let us here draw the veil, and proceed with the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DISPOSES OF SOME CHARACTERS, AND BEGINS THE END.

ANTIETAM'S fields had been soaked with the rich blood of thousands, and was now almost forgotten, save by those who suffered. Lee had taken command of the Army of Virginia, and was lying behind his works at Fredericksburg, while McClellan was treading upon the treacherous quicksands of politics. The story of Pope's retreat, and the shame of Fitz John Porter, was being freshened in the minds of the people by inquiries concerning the conduct of the war, and disaster after disaster followed, with nothing to brighten the gloom save an occasional success on the sea.

Mr. Nidd was pursuing the even tenor of his ways, but with a sharp eye upon his old friend Wontus. He (Nidd) had always suspected that there was something more than a mere feeling of friendship existing between Wontus and Mrs. Flick, but now it had come to pass that Wontus had ceased referring to that lady in any way; and yet Nidd knew that his friend's absence from the house of Mr. Diddler for two or three days at a time was to be accounted for by his presence at the capital. Of course, Nidd knew that Wontus had no bills of any kind whatever to put before Congress, but he felt that our hero had a suit to press in the court of Cupid, and, with a delicacy usually foreign to him, he respected his friend's modesty, and refrained from ever giving vent to his knowledge or suspicions.

Thomas Thomson was improving in his manners and general education. His travels, although moderate, had been of great service to him, and intercourse with men and things had taught him that a corps was not a corpse, although he contended on all occasions when reading of the movements of the army that a corps was a corpse, and that all the rules

of orthoepy could not alter it. A corpse was a corps all the world over, and so he would and did pronounce it. But there were some things which had been developed during his visit to the army which he was never heard to refer to. He knew that Miss Phillis Offley had been a frequent and anxious inquirer at the house of Mr. Diddler during his absence, and this knowledge so increased his respect for that young woman that his eyes never met hers without a crimson flush coming to his cheek. But Phillis Offley had ceased her visits now, and Mr. Diddler was no longer called upon to answer the question: "How is the young gentleman what has gone a sogerin' ?" The young gentleman who had gone a soldiering was on the spot, and his frequent appearance in the neighborhood of a certain house on Third Avenue made it quite certain that if he had the privilege of deciding, that question would never been asked of mortal man again. Day after day they gazed into each other's faces, and talked of things which neither thought of. Such, I am told, is the custom with bashful lovers.

With the man as well as the master Mr. Nidd was interested, and he watched the progress of events in both cases with manifest interest. His own disappointments did not seem to inflict a very deep wound,—although he hated now a certain individual more than ever,—and the lack of excitement in his business was balanced by the friendly feeling he commenced to experience toward the members of the old corps of observation. He was as austere and as didactic in his manners as ever, but he no longer endeavored to hide the good that was in him, but let it come to the surface with the bad, —nature was playing her part untrammeled. Even Wilkins had been forgiven, and as Wontus had particularly requested it, a correspondence had been opened with that gentleman. Aside, however, from this request of Mr. Wontus, Nidd had some curiosity to gratify. He had always argued that Wilkins was born to be hung, and that he might verify his thoughts, he continued the correspondence with great regularity.

Strange as the statement may appear when we come to remember the feeling between these gentlemen, this correspondence was particularly agreeable to Wilkins, and for two reasons. The first, and probably most important, was that it enabled him to make frequent requisitions on his correspond-

ent for small sums of money, for which he invariably returned his promissory note, drawn up in the most scrupulous legal form; the second was, because it gave him such an opportunity as was not to be neglected, to detail the particulars of some of his most dashing and daring exploits without fear of contradiction. Need I add that these notes, as well as the letters, fell into the hands of Mr. Wontus? Nidd contended that it was enough for him to write the letters, and therefore declined being compelled to pay for the privilege.

I cannot undertake to relate here the incidents and adventures so peculiarly and graphically described by the man who experienced them. They were numerous and without a parallel, as was generally the case with everything which Benjamin Wilkins recited. That he should be the confidential friend and adviser of most of the prominent generals I have only to refer to his letters to prove; that he refused numerous promotions and offices of great honor I am assured from the same source. I feel sorry to part with Benjamin, and yet, as with all the rest, he must be disposed of. What better place can I leave him in than in the army? Here he stands alone, in all the glory with which he has surrounded himself. He has become the master of a wagon and six mules; has accepted the position much against the wishes of his superiors, who want him to go higher, simply because here he can make himself most useful. He grows in popularity and influence with a speed never before equaled, and his last letter hints strongly at his soon yielding to the overtures already made, when, in case he does yield, he becomes the commander of at least a brigade of the army.

[*Note.*—Benjamin Wilkins did not yield.]

The friendship which had been cultivated under such singular and exciting circumstances between Wontus and Lathrop Blakely was lasting and most agreeable. The colonel was colonel no longer. A star graced his shoulder, and where bullets flew thickest there he was to be found. He was the cheerful volunteer for every forlorn-hope, and although Wontus believed that his telling Blakely of his (Wontus's) affection for his darling Kate would be adding sorrow to a heart already heavy, yet his sense of honor would not permit him to withhold it. The letter which he received from the colonel in return was laden with the kindest wishes for his correspond-

ent's happiness in the future, but he declined, most positively, to be present on the one particular day in the near future at which time Mr. Wontus declared he would cease to live for nothing. His duty was with the army; there he would remain.

Those who were about him said that his every-day life was an enigma to his friends; he lived, as it were, in a dream. Occasionally his inborn nature—that nameless spirit which He has placed in every human breast—would come to the surface, only to be throttled and thrown back into the deep gloom of a disappointed heart. Courteous and kind at all times, there was an air about him which forbade inquiry, and his secrets of the past were hidden from the gaze of a curious world.

As we already know, Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson was ever a feature in the mind of Gascon Nidd. From the very moment in which he first laid eyes on that gentleman, he seemed to take an unconquerable dislike to him, and the different accidents which threw them together in later days added no panacea to the cancerous sore. It is not known that Mr. Higginson ever cared a snap of his finger for Mr. Nidd or his dislike; but this could not be said of Nidd, for in a letter which that gentleman (Nidd) wrote to a mutual friend on his return from the army the following is found:

"Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson, otherwise 'Scribendi,' was such a man as can be seen in the political arena every day. With a fine appearance, and a nature which bid him seek credit for all that is good, he visited the army because he needed the knowledge and the evidence of men to forward his ambitious, selfish purposes. Cringing and circumspect in the presence of those whose stations in life he believed made them his superiors; clownish and forcibly gay in the presence of those by whom he was occasionally acknowledged as an equal; boorish, and like the master of a dog, who kicks or fondles with his animal as circumstances or his passions dictate, he found it necessary at times to mingle with a class which *he* judged to be his inferiors (*who* makes one man the judge of his neighbor?), and thus occasionally found himself in the company of those who, when the rich and powerful passed him, made him blush for his associations.

"He, like the rest of us, has returned, and his arrival has been blazoned in the columns of the newspapers, and his deeds of

bravery and hardihood are only excelled by those of the greatest living fabricator, Benjamin Wilkins. He speaks of the great men he has met, and details his conversation with them, with an exactness painful to listen to. With him, like the followers of Hamlet, clouds very like a whale vanished into thin air, or assume another shape at a word from wealth or power. His humbleness and impudence is Heep-like, and he knows well where to use either commodity to the best advantage."

In vain Mr. Wontus endeavored to induce Nidd to forget that such a man as "Scribendi" ever lived. Nidd was changed and softened in many respects, but concerning the individual who had been more fortunate than himself,—for a woman was at the bottom of it after all,—he knew no change, no mercy; nothing but hatred old and bitter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MAKES WONTUS HAPPY AND ENDS THE BOOK.

The time has at length arrived when I must bid adieu to the friends who have been before me so many weeks, and whose forms I have so many times during those weeks wished to banish from my presence forever. But now that the hour is at hand when I *must* say good-by, I find in my heart a desire to linger with them just a little while longer. Even the yellowish paper which lies on my table, filled with the angular characters which have had so much to do with the creation of the men and women of the story, has become a familiar object for me to gaze upon, and habit has taught me to look for it. But the spot will soon be vacant now, for the end is near.

Time had altered Mr. Wontus in more ways than one. He was graver and more sedate than formerly. He was braver, too, and more self-reliant. Something had changed him. True, his associates found him much the same as before, yet his tastes were different, and even Nidd, his particular friend and companion, found it impossible to drag him from the voluntary seclusion which he now seemed to enjoy so much.

Washington, once so distasteful and distressing to him, had undergone a strange metamorphosis in a few short months. It was now a charming place, and its magical influences were so strong that our hero was never more highly pleased and better satisfied than when alighting from the cars of that solitary railroad leading into the capital. He acknowledged this, and spoke by experience. His Sundays, and frequently other days, were regularly spent there, and had been for some time. He had come to think that he had something to live for.

When we last saw him, he had just communicated to Mrs. Flick the news of her father's death, and she had swooned away in his arms. As the couple looked at that moment, it was questionable which of them was entitled to the most sympathy. The face of the lady as she lay upon his shoulder was white, and as rigid as marble; the face of the gentleman was exceedingly red, and his whole form trembled with emotion. Afraid to call for help, lest his position might be misunderstood, and never having been placed in such a position before, his corpulent body swayed to and fro like a drunken man, and he felt that the moment was drawing near when he would certainly faint himself. But that moment did not come. Slowly his charge opened her eyes and gazed about her, and then extended her hand toward a chair. Mr. Wontus understood the movement, and tenderly seating the lady, drew the table in front of her, and then looked as if he would like to do something else for her relief, without knowing how or where to commence. It was a very painful sight, was this sorrowing woman for Mr. Wontus to look upon, and he felt very awkward indeed as he walked around the room endeavoring to find something upon which he might rivet his attention until such time as it would be proper for him to speak. He at length reached the window, and was standing there looking into the street, with his thoughts a confused mass which he found impossible to untangle, when his attention was attracted by a movement of the lady. As he turned toward her, he noticed that she had regained considerably her usual composure, and with tear-wet eyes was gazing abstractedly upon the floor.

"All gone!" she moaned. "Whither shall I turn? What shall I do?" Her head bent forward as she spoke, and her voice was low and pleading.

At this moment our hero could bear anything better than

silence. "Madam," said he, his voice low and tremulous with emotion, "please consider me your protector. I have no desire to be more than a father—no, not exactly a father—to you, and I sympathize with you most deeply. I love—I would love——" He could say no more.

It was a long while ere either spoke again; but when the silence was broken, the lady spoke in her slow, sad way: "My best, nay, my dearest friend, I owe you much,—much more than I can speak. To whom in this hour of my greatest grief can I turn for that sympathy and that succor which I so sadly need? Where are my friends? To whom shall I look for a word of counsel?" As she finished speaking she turned her expressive eyes upon Wontus, and in a moment more that gentleman was swearing eternal fidelity at her knees. She should come to him, he would be her protector, and a father to her child. The curtain falls.

That evening Mr. Wontus returned to his hotel without knowing whether he had walked or flown. His offer had been accepted, and the widow and her child were his to protect and defend until some one with a better right should take his place. This accounted for his frequent visits to Washington after he had returned to New York; and this accounted for the many changes in his disposition and mode of life. At first he had looked upon himself as simply the guardian of the woman he loved, but as he became a more frequent visitor his old ideas returned. He pressed his suit delicately at first, and was met with a mild rebuff, which only added stimulant to his passion; and ere the fall had settled into winter he was the affianced husband of the only woman he had ever had the courage to propose to. He informed Nidd of his engagement, and requested that gentleman's assistance. He should have it.

It was January. The ides of the month had come, and the snow stood on the house-tops like icing on a wedding-cake; it glistened in the morning sun like burnished silver, and the air was keen and searching. It was the crowning day of Wontus's life; it was his wedding-day, and he felt the responsibilities of his situation. All the preparations had been made. Phillis Offley had become a part of his household, and certainly no more careful and dutiful servant could have been selected.

For the last time Wontus looked upon himself as a bachelor; henceforth he was to wear the chains of a benedict, and he was wondering what the future had in store for him.

Yesterday he had bid adieu to Mr. Diddler and his interesting family, and now he stood in his own house on Lexington Avenue, and gazed out of the window and worked nervously at the white kid gloves which the dictates of fashion compelled him to wear on this most important occasion. Bright, cheerful fires threw their ruddy glare on the window-panes of the newly and neatly-furnished house, and the merry jingle of the passing sleighs came to his heart like the glad tidings of a rejuvenated life, and that told him that others were as happy as himself.

Two hours were yet wanting ere the important moment was at hand, and Wontus wished that it was either further off or over; and he wandered from room to room with alternate shades of joy and sadness overspreading his face. For the hundredth time he had questioned Miss Offley concerning the wardrobes and other fixtures of the chambers, and Thomas Thomson had made himself tired in following his master about and replacing the articles of furniture which Wontus in his nervous excitement was constantly displacing.

I have always thought that Mr. Wontus's love was more the result of accident than design. That he did love, and love most earnestly, certainly none can question. But I have always thought that had any other woman been thrown in his way the result would have been all the same. His nature was all love, and his sympathies went out to every human being in distress. A veneration for woman, so high as to be almost verging on the unnatural, had kept him a single man thus far, and now his mind was so laden with the prospects of the new life which his imagination spread before him that he seemed to exist in that sphere generally assigned to Mahomet's coffin. He had no fears for anything but himself, and the question which he asked himself many times was whether *he* was worthy.

I have often wondered how it was that no question of her love for him ever appeared to enter his mind. *He* loved, and that was all he cared for. If she did not love in return, he would ask her to respect him, and for this he would dedicate his life to her. This was his mental resolve as he paced the floor and awaited the all-important moment.

The bride had arrived the evening before in charge of Mr. Nidd, and was now at the St. Nicholas; the arrangements for the wedding had all been made by the same gentleman, and the preliminaries were disposed of with combined legal and military exactness. There was no unnecessary, and hence foolish, expenditure of money; nor was there any ostentatious show. Everything which Nidd did was after the same style in which the gentleman had taught himself to live, and although Wontus occasionally complained at the want of style, he was invariably silenced with the remark that he (Nidd) had been there, and knew that the money saved could be mad of far greater and better use in some other direction. They might want bread some time.

Mr. Diddler, his family, and a few particular personal friends, were all that were invited to witness the ceremony, and at two o'clock P.M. Olympus Wontus, with his wife on his arm, walked into the house on Lexington Avenue, followed by Mr. Nidd, with Diddler's daughter, "Sis," Thomas Thomson, and Phillis Offley. The bride was attired in a dress of sombre hues, and her face was pale and thin, but as she entered the parlor her eyes beamed with a look of subdued happiness, and ere Mr. Wontus was aware of it she had pillowed her head upon his heart. The storm was over, and the ship was in the harbor of safety.

> "Should'st thou live but once love's sweets to prove,
> Thou wilt not love to live, unless thou live to love."

It was a part of Mr. Wontus's agreement with himself, that under no circumstances would he ever refer to the past history of his wife. He knew many things concerning her which he had learned from his friend Blakely, but he felt that she would be happier if she did not know that he knew of them; and the days that were passing, although sometimes cold and cheerless without, were always bright and happy within. Sometimes he saw shades of sadness steal over his wife's countenance as they read of the movements of the two opposing armies, but he knew that that was but natural, and as each was content to live for the other, matters of opinion were never permitted to disturb the serene happiness of their lives; and thus time flew by, and Mr. Wontus blessed the day on which he had organized the Corps of Observation.

Among the most regular visitors whom Wontus could boast of was Gascon Nidd. He had come to be very fond of Mrs. Wontus and the little one, and occasionally referred to what might have been had *he* had fair play. On these occasions Mr. Wontus would laugh, and repeat what he had often said before: that it was never too late to mend.

It was evening when Mr. Nidd unceremoniously rushed in upon the privacy of the newly-married couple. He made no apologies; he attempted no excuse. His face wore an expression unusual of late, and was painfully savage. It was only after he had drawn a newspaper from his pocket and shook out its rustling folds that he deigned to speak.

"Wontus," said he, and he clinched his lips as he spoke, "I have a Philadelphia paper here. As it contains something of interest to you, your good lady will probably allow me to read it." Mr. Nidd might have left the latter part of his speech unspoken, for before either Wontus or his "good lady" had an opportunity to reply, the conveyancer cleared his throat with an effort, and, stepping up to the light, read the following, which he declared had the merit of having been written by the recipient of the honors:

"We congratulate the President, the army, and our citizens generally, over the fact that our esteemed and distinguished fellow-citizen, Colonel Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson, has received the unsolicited [remarks of a violent character from the reader] appointment of minister to one of the most powerful nations of the world. Mr. Higginson is a gentleman of fine abilities [continuation of remarks], and although not a journalist by profession, has contributed many most entertaining and valuable articles to the columns of the different journals of this and other cities. He has but recently returned from the sanguinary battle-fields [more remarks] of the Peninsula and elsewhere, and carries with him not only the respect of the generals with whom he served, but many scars received in honorable conflict. His services to the country have been most valuable [cutting sarcasm by the reader], and it is with peculiar pleasure that we congratulate him, personally, on the further sacrifice [complicated words of advice and extended remarks on sacrifices] which he feels it his duty to make. He leaves for his new field of labor in a few days, accompanied by his charming wife, and carries with him the hearty

good wishes and most profound confidence of the government and a host of loving friends."

"There!" cried Nidd, throwing the papers upon the floor, and speaking with a vehemence customary under such circumstances, "there's a man who has nothing to recommend him but his fawning impudence, appointed to a lucrative office, while deserving, maimed men, who served their country out of a pure and unselfish patriotic love, are left to fight poverty and distress unaided, except by the hand of charity, while this fellow is crowned with honors and lives in elegance and ease.

"I know him,—*we* know him," he continued, after a brief pause, and addressing himself to Wontus, as though he expected that gentleman to back up his assertion, "don't we? He wears the graces of Apollo, the beard of Hercules, and the frowns of Mars; but has, as Shakspeare says, 'a liver white as milk.'" (Another pause, during which Mr. Wontus endeavored to turn the conversation into a more pleasing and less abusive channel.) "Great heavens!" continued Nidd, his manner evincing intense disgust, "this should not be. I know that that man (he pointed in the direction in which Washington was supposed to lie) has been deceived."

At this juncture Mrs. Wontus came to her husband's aid, and with a woman's tact seized upon the suggestive pointing of Nidd, to dilate at considerable length upon the many kind actions of Mr. Lincoln. She would suffer no interruption, and thus Edward Pason Montcalm Higginson was permitted to enjoy his honors and his journey in peace. Mr. Nidd had no words for any other subject, and ere the hour of ten had arrived he could have been found in his lonely lodgings, deep in cogitations over the cunning and deceit of people of both sexes.

When the gentle zephyrs of summer were waving the green, fresh grass in the park, it was no unusual sight to see Mr. Wontus, but a few short months before a bachelor, leading a handsome little boy along the gravelly walks, and listening to his childlike prattle with all the fondness of a loving parent. Both Wontus and the child looked happy. The kind nature of the man had won the child's affection, and he claimed Mr. Wontus as his father.

If you asked the boy his name, he would tell you in a bold, defiant way, that it was Lee Wigfall Wontus. If you went

further and asked him which side of the great struggle he favored, he would tell you that he loved the old flag, with its pretty stripes and stars,—that he was a Union *man* and a Yankee.

On these occasions Mr. Wontus would laugh most heartily, and if you questioned *him* concerning the truth of the child's assertion, he would refer you to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Thomson, who presided over certain departments in the house on Lexington Avenue, and who, he declared, knew as much about his affairs as he did himself.

THE END.

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